

/ISLAMIC SOUQS (BAZAARS) IN THE URBAN CONTEXT:
THE SOUQ OF NABLUS

By

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B.S., Yarmouk University, Jordan, 1984

A MASTER'S THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

College of Architecture and Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas
1989

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To my wife "Taghreed," my first son "Ahmed," and the
expected babies.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Professors Ray Weisenburger, Donald Watts and Lyn Norris-Baker, for their valid criticisms and assistance during the process of writing this thesis. I am also indebted to An-Najah National University and the AMIDEAST for their financial support. I would like to thank Dr. Abdulaziz al-Saati, head of the Department of Architecture at King Faisal University; Dr. M.K. Salkini, head of the Department of Architecture at Aleppo University; Mr. Nader Ardalan, co-author of THE SENSE OF UNITY; Mr. Taleb al-Taher, head of the Arab Cities Organization; Mr. Ibrahim al-Fanni; Mr. Amer Moustafa, M.I.T.; and Mr. Khalid Qamhiyyeh, architect at the Municipality of Nablus, for their help in providing assistance and valuable materials for this research. Finally, I would like to thank the members of my family for the sacrifices they have made to help me.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.a Background

Souq, in general, is an Arabic word that indicates the shopping area or the market place. It is also called Bazaar, a Persian word, in many Islamic countries. In some Arab countries the term "Bazaar" is used to indicate only the covered (particularly vaulted) part of the souq. Again, the word souq can be used for a shop-lined street within the shopping area, or it might indicate a specific part of the larger souq which is usually specialized in selling one kind of goods as in "Souq al-Qattanin," the cotton market in Jerusalem.

"Islamic souqs" means specifically those kind of souqs that have, almost, the same characteristics and features which exist only in Islamic cities and have been built or taken their final shape during the Islamic rule, when every aspect of life was strongly influenced by religion. The feeling of the common features between Islamic souqs is best expressed by an American whose career had given him the opportunity of living in several "Near Eastern" cities, who observed that: "If you have seen one souq you have seen them all."¹

Besides their commercial function, souqs serve as the

focal point for social interaction and communal life. They are always located near or around the Friday mosque. Thus, if the Friday mosque is considered as the heart of the Islamic city, the souq is necessarily its backbone spine. In general, this well-developed institution forms a unique urban design element found only in Islamic cities, a feature which distinguishes them from other cities throughout the world.

1.b Purpose of Study

Recently, since the industrial revolution, souqs have been declining. They will continue to decline if they are not given more attention. Preservation and restoration of the souqs can help in saving the continuity of their role as a place for commercial transactions and as a focused social institution for society. Through rehabilitation, souqs can survive and become more vital.

This study concentrates on the Souq of Nablus, a large city in the West Bank (part of the area historically known as Palestine), see Figure 1. The Souq of Nablus is a small one compared to those in large cities like Aleppo, Isfahan, and Tunisia. Although the Souq of Nablus is still alive, its importance is declining due to competition by the modern commercial center and the deterioration of its

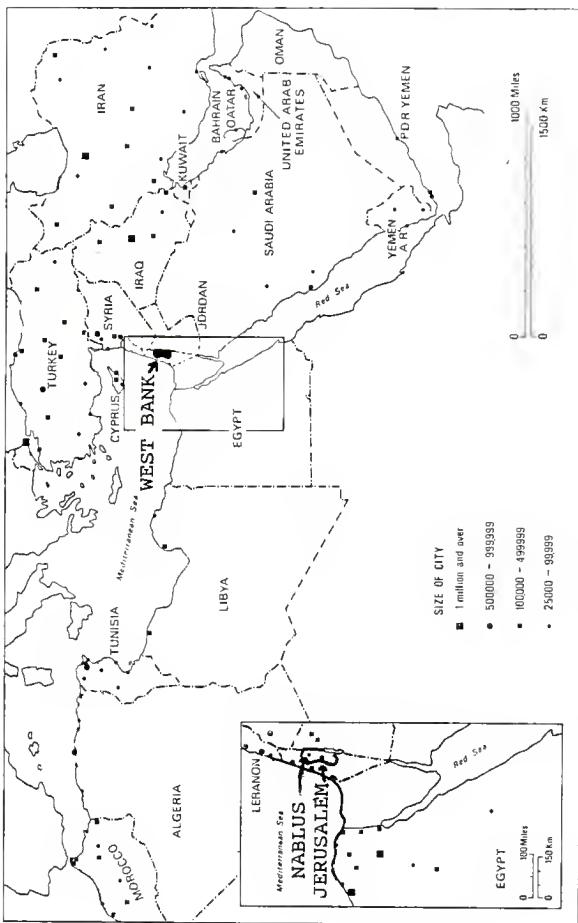


Fig. 1. Map showing the West Bank and the surrounding countries.

Source: Beaumont, P., Blake, G.H., and Wagstaff, J.M., The Middle East: A Geographical Study, 1976, p. 216.

physical structure. There has been no attempt to conserve or adapt the Souq of Nablus to the functional needs of daily modern life within the social and environmental context of the city.

So, the purpose of this study is to develop a strategy for improving the environmental quality of the Souq of Nablus. A strategy for a rehabilitation and restoration will be developed for that area to fit with the future commercial needs of the city.

1.c Scope of Study

Since traditional souqs are developed over a long period of time and have played a most important role in urban history, a brief historical review of the development of souqs will be presented.

In order to accomplish this study on the Souq of Nablus, it is important to understand and analyze the major characteristics of other similar souqs in the surrounding areas having the same cultural heritage. This importance stems from the following:

1. Lack of written information and detailed maps on the Souq of Nablus. No previous studies have been made on this souq.

2. The Souq of Nablus is small compared to the other large souqs in the cities of Aleppo, Isfahan, and Tunisia.
3. The city of Nablus itself is not large compared to these cities, and so the commercial role of the city was not as widespread as Aleppo or Isfahan.
4. Some parts of the Souq of Nablus have been demolished, others were converted and are currently serving different functions. In Aleppo and Isfahan, for example, the souqs have been mostly saved and are well maintained.
5. Many previous studies have been done on the souqs of Aleppo, Isfahan, Tunisia and other Islamic cities.

This research will be used to identify the programs and activities that work in well developed souqs. This information will be compared to the programs and activities found in the Souq of Nablus. The purpose of the study is to identify what can be done to revitalize the Souq of Nablus.

Therefore, it will be possible to analyze and critique the Souq of Nablus in a way that enables establishing urban design guidelines that will contribute to the survival and vitality of this traditional market-place hoping that the city of Nablus will embark upon a policy of conserving, preserving, and rehabilitating the traditional built environment of the community.

The urban design guidelines will be developed to promote the continuing use of the souq as a functioning commercial center. Therefore, the guidelines will have a historic, social, economic, and behavioral base. Also, contemporary concepts and theories of urban design will be used in order to give a direction to this research and to see which of them can be applied to that specific area.

1.d Importance of Study

Traditional souqs are experiencing a decline throughout Islamic cities these days and commercial activities seem to be shifting to new centers outside the old parts of these cities. This shift poses a threat to the traditional souqs and could lead to their disappearance. Therefore, souqs need to be analyzed and evaluated to see how well they have worked in the past and how well they might function in the future.

Such study will be useful to the municipality of Nablus in particular, and other cities that have a similar urban feature in general. The Municipality of Nablus, since it is the only authority in the city, can adopt such guidelines and recommendations to develop an overall policy for improving the environmental quality of the old city. It will also serve as a reference point for developers and designers involved in commercial projects in similar areas.

1.e Methodology of Study

In the process of collecting data for this research, three methods were applied: library research, fieldwork, and interviews.

Library research

A great deal of information and written material about Islamic souqs is available. Many studies have been accomplished on the souqs of Aleppo and Isfahan, the best developed, preserved, and documented sites.² These two souqs are selected in this research as case studies, and will be compared and contrasted with the Souq of Nablus. A recent study dealing with the socio-economic aspects and physical environment analysis has been made on the souqs of Tunisia and the western Islamic countries.³ Other less detailed studies on the souqs of Sana'a, Istanbul and other Islamic cities have also been made.⁴ These studies are used in analyzing and evaluating the different features of souqs in general. The bases for evaluation are:

- City size.
- Circulation.
- Goods and services offered.
- Technology.
- Convenience.

- Density.
- Business organization.
- Political role.
- Economic role.

Only then will it be possible to understand the choices to be made and the reasons why the souq should receive new attention.

Fieldwork

Since there is no written material about the Souq of Nablus, it was necessary to undertake analysis in the field, (survey of existing physical conditions), and use the direct observational method to study and analyze the life in the souq. The activities of people in the souq were observed. Also recorded were the types of existing shops and other shops that might be needed or were removed from the souq to other places. The accurate image of the souq and its vicinity was photographed and surveyed. Official maps were obtained from the Municipality of Nablus. It was difficult to gather information on demolished areas, and because of time constraints, it was not possible to make accurate plans for these parts, although it was possible to collect general information about the original context. However, analyzing the current condition was the primary goal.

Interviews

Many pedestrians and shopkeepers in different parts of the Souq of Nablus were interviewed. City officials, who provided information and official maps of the old city, were also interviewed.

Due to many issues, (cultural, political and security), most of interviews were informal conversations rather than a formal questionnaire. A set of prepared questions was used only to interview the officials of the Municipality and Chamber of Commerce. Each of these questions was developed to obtain their views and perception of the present situation and their future plans for the entire old city. These questions are shown in (Appendix A).

These interviews were helpful in getting an in depth understanding of the issues and needs involved in the redevelopment of the Souq of Nablus. Since it was not possible to write the answers down in front of those being interviewed, the comments and conclusions were recorded after completing the informal conversation. The common responses, those that were mentioned by many people who were interviewed, are used in developing statements of strategy, (goals and objectives), to be used in the program for redeveloping the souq.

1.f Organization of Study

This research is divided into six chapters. The first concerns introductory explanations for the purpose, scope, importance, methodology, and organization of the study. The second chapter presents a historical background and the evolution of souqs. The reasons behind the deterioration of these traditional markets are also discussed in this part. In the third chapter traditional souqs are analyzed and evaluated. The analysis and evaluation will identify the elements of the souq which are working and those that are not. Documentation of two case studies (Aleppo and Isfahan) is the subject of chapter 4. In the fifth chapter the Souq of Nablus is analyzed and evaluated in detail. A comparative analysis is used to evaluate and compare the Souq of Nablus with other souqs. The analysis and comparison parameters include:

- Location.
- Socio-economic aspects.
- Political and technological issues.
- Spatial and functional activities.
- Architectural characteristics.
- Supporting communal and cultural institutions.

In the sixth chapter reasons behind the needs for saving the souqs are first discussed. Then, as the final part of

this study, chapter 6, presents a preservation and rehabilitation program that focuses on saving and regaining the vitality of traditional souqs in general, and the Souq of Nablus in particular.

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

1. Brown, L. C. (ed.), From Madina to Metropolis, Princeton, The Darwin Press Inc., 1973, p. 21.
2. See, for example, Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, Der Bazar von Isfahan, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1978; N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973; S. Cantacuzino and K. Browne, "Isfahan", Architectural Review, May 1976 (special issue); Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, Aleppo, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1984; and J. Sauvaget, "Aleppo", Ekistics, June 1961.
3. See B. S. Hakim, The Arabic-Islamic Cities, London, 1986.
4. See, for example, Eleanor Sims, "Trade and Travel: Markets and Caravan Series," in Micheil George (ed.), Architecture of the Islamic World, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1978.

CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION OF SOUQS

2.a History and Evolution

Before dealing with the historic development of souqs, it is necessary to discuss, in general, the concept of the "Islamic city" itself since the souq is one of its major characteristic features.

A variety of essays and books exist on Islamic cities. Most of these deal with a specific city, but a number deal more broadly with the topic. The concept of the "Islamic city" has not been sufficiently studied and it is still a subject of argument among scholars. Questions like "What is an Islamic city?" or "Is there an Islamic city?" and "What makes the Islamic city different from other cities?" still exist and are not fully answered.

Many Western scholars use a variety of names such as Near Eastern, Western Asian and Arab-Islamic, to describe the Islamic city. Others deny that there is anything that might be called "Islamic," even the idea of directing mosques toward Mecca. ¹ Nonetheless, an implicit notion of a "Muslim city" does exist.

Other scholars, like Lapidus, go far enough to deny the existence of any uniqueness in Islamic cities. But, of course, most scholars take issue with Lapidus since Muslim

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cities do have certain distinctive features. Unfortunately, even those scholars who admit to or have found a unique or distinctive features in the Islamic city, have described the city, in the past, as an ugly or disorganized jumble. Probably, the reason behind this trend is well explained by Janet Abu-Lughod, an American professor of sociology and urban affairs, as follows:

"There seems to be a distinct prejudice against the Middle Eastern (particularly the medieval Islamic) city. It has been criticized on two grounds. First, it is claimed that the Islamic city, as contrasted with the Greek or Roman (i.e., the "civilized" cities of the West), lacked aesthetic form. Second, that it, as contrasted with the Greek polis and the western medieval autocephalic town, lacked municipal institutions, in fact, governance itself. ... Prejudice, then, not to mention a general neglect of Middle Eastern history in the West, has tended to minimize the importance of the Islamic city sui generis and to isolate it from the mainstream of historical development."³

Janet Abu-Lughod even goes further to suggest that the Islamic city has something important to teach us about urban design. She sees that the medieval Islamic city offers more parallels to the contemporary American city⁴ than do either the Greek polis or the medieval Commune. Also, trying to define the "Levels of space awareness in the traditional Islamic city," Paul Wheatley mentioned:

"I doubt if the street patterns within residential quarters of the representative Middle Eastern city were as chaotic as Western writers have customarily depicted them."⁵

Therefore, it is not unusual to find that the Islamic city seemed, for a long time, relatively fluid and formless by Western standards.

On the other hand, scholars who appreciate traditional Islamic cities, muslims and non-muslims, go beyond the title and try to define the characteristic features which distinguish the Islamic cities from others.

There is no doubt that anyone who has the opportunity to experience, say, Fez, Istanbul, or Isfahan would argue that such cities possess a cultural core, however elusive to describe, that is and will forever be distinctive. Even if experts and laymen dispute what generic label to apply, there could be a consensus that these cities are properly distinguishable from New York, Paris, Calcutta, Nairobi, or ⁶ Shanghai. These cities have survived for centuries, forming the matrix for a high cultural tradition. Something clearly held these cities together. If not a civic spirit, then what was it?

Despite the different explanations of the origins of its features, Islamic cities in the medieval Middle-East had many unique features which distinguished them from the "Hellenic cities" as well as from the pre-industrial cities of medieval Europe. And further, Islam played the most significant role in creating a sense of functional if not

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civic unity among its various constituent groups.

It is true that many cities had pre-Islamic origins, but matured under Islamic regimes. It is not that the Hellenic and Roman gridiron plan had been preserved down to the Muslim period. As a matter of fact, the decomposition of the checkerboard had in some places begun as early as the ⁸ second century A.D., if not sooner. During the Byzantine period the gradual forsaking of the geometric block structure had become an accomplished fact in towns like Damascus and Aleppo. But the development was consummated under the Muslim domination, and there were many cities which, having fallen into decadence, found renewed vigor ⁹ and prosperity with the arrival of Islam. In fact, there was by the time of the Muslim rule of the provinces of the ¹⁰ Roman Empire nothing left to inherit.

However, many of the recent concepts of urban design are already existing in the "disorganized" traditional Islamic city, if the gridiron pattern means organization. The principles which constituted the deep grammar of that city could be the basis for contemporary city-building. These principles are still valid and indeed are being applied and ¹¹ rediscovered in the West.

Without attempting, carefully, to define the features of the Islamic city, it is necessary to give an idea about the

image of that city since the "Souq" is one of its dominant features. It is possible to construct a picture of a "typical" Islamic city. Speaking very roughly, we may say that one should expect to find such features, in terms of layout and physical form, as the following: (Figure 2)

- First, there would be a citadel, very often placed on some natural defense work.
- Second, there might be a royal "city" or "quarter" which would include the administrative offices. The location could be either around the city center or in the citadel.
- Third, there would be a central urban complex which would include the great mosques (especially the Friday mosque) and religious schools, and the central markets with their khans and gaysariyyas, and with special places assigned for the main groups of craftsmen or traders. (Please refer to the glossary in Appendix B).
- Fourth, there would be a "core" of residential quarters.
- And fifth, streets would be narrow and winding,
especially in residential areas.¹²

Other features like hammams (public baths), the surrounding wall, and the maydan (the major open space), are still an argument between scholars.

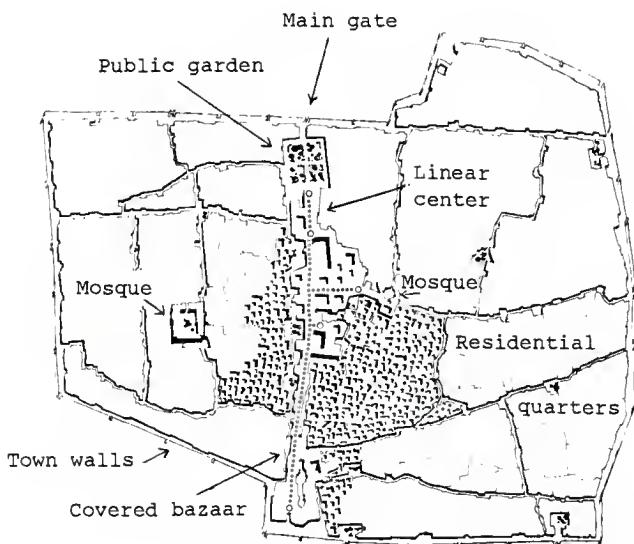


Fig. 2. Typical traditional Islamic city, Kashan (Iran).

Source: Roberts, M. Hugh, An Urban Profile of the Middle East, 1979, p. 37.

However, scholars generally agree that the Islamic city has two focal points: the Friday mosque and the Souq (the focus of this study). And, because there is a strong relationship between them, they are always adjacent to each other and located somewhere in the center of the city.

Even scholars, like Wirth, who reject the usefulness or "reality" of the concept "Muslim City" admit that the souq is original. The souq, according to Eugene Wirth, is the only innovation that one can find in the Muslim city in comparison with other types of cities.¹³

Other scholars, like Geertz, see the souq as a cultural form, a social institution, and an economic type and suggest that if Islamic civilization can be characterized by one of its leading institutions, then the souq should be the prime candidate.¹⁴

The typical organization of souqs was almost the same in every Islamic city. Ibn Battuta, when he visited the Muslim quarter of a Chinese town, observed that its market was arranged exactly as in the towns of the dar al-Islam. Additionally, souqs do exhibit everywhere in Islamic lands the same general structure. For one thing, the producers or retailers of the same kind of goods will always occupy adjacent stalls; each trade, with few exceptions, is likely to have one of the market lanes completely to itself,

(reasons behind this grouping are explained in Chapter 3).

More important still, the order in which various goods follow one another in the layout of souqs is apt to be substantially the same wherever we go in Muslim lands. There was a hierarchical arrangement of trades within the souq. Specific kinds of goods were always located near the jami', others were to be found only near the city gates, and between these two poles, the remaining goods are located.¹⁵ The arrangement of trades in the Islamic souq will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Often the name of each section or street was referred to by the occupational name of the craftsmen or traders who worked or lived there, and its position in relation to the mosque was determined by the religious role of the goods they sold or the attitude of the shari'a towards them.¹⁶ (The shari'a is the Islamic law stemming from the Qur'an and regulating the social lives of Islamic society.)

The origins of this well-developed institution are not clear. Some theories state that it evolved from the Greek and Roman commercial facilities. Supporters of this theory include J. Sauvaget, G.E. von Grunebaum, and Rudolph Meyer Riefstahl, who trace the evolution of the souqs from the Roman forum, macellum, and basilica as part of the Islamization of the city and markets and their activities.

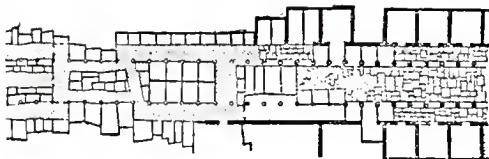


Fig. 3. The transformation process of a Hellenistic thoroughfare into a medieval Islamic souq.

Source: Sauvaget, J., "Aleppo" (tr. Jacqueline Tyrwhitt). *Ekistics*, June 1961, p. 397.

Sauvaget's theory, shown in Figure 3, deals with the hypothetical process of the transformation of the antique thoroughfare in a pre-Islamic city into a medieval Islamic city souq. He tested his hypothesis on Aleppo and Damascus, cities of pre-Islamic origin, where commercial activities went on in the same place as in the Roman epoch. The streets of antiquity were gradually encroached upon by shops and houses in the Islamic period, resulting in a new townscape. The great Roman thoroughfare of Aleppo, with its side arcades, took on a new and completely different form. The arcades were occupied by shops, the roadway itself was invaded by booths, and a maze of souqs developed. ¹⁷ This theory applies only to cities of pre-Islamic origin, such as Aleppo and Damascus. There is strong evidence, however, that the souq existed in early cities founded by Muslims, ¹⁸ although they were architecturally very simple.

The second theory suggests that it is a purely oriental institution and developed according to Islamic traditions. For Islam was born in a land with many centuries of experience in trading on the land routes between Yemen and the Mediterranean. Thus, it is certain that regular markets were already in existence among the Arabs before Islam, and the souq was used not only in the meaning of "market-place"¹⁹ but also in that of "market".

The prophet Mohammad himself had chosen the location of the Madina souq close to the jam'i (the Friday mosque). He wanted the souq to be there for reasons far from economic; maximum social interaction between Muslims occurs within the Friday mosque area and, thus, religious and commercial activities were by no means mutually exclusive. In doing so, both the souq (secular) and the mosque (religious) institutions supported each other, forming a communal and physical center and paving the way for a new traditional city form. It is also mentioned that specialized souqs did exist in the area near the Friday mosque of Medina. Among these were the souq of date sellers, fruit sellers, bakers, dyers, tailors, leather merchants, sellers of copper utensils, and smiths.²⁰ It is reported that the markets, in their early years, were left open without being built on or covered. The tradition of having covered markets within the Arab-Muslim city began in the early Umayyad period (seventh

century). However, this tradition seems to have reached its peak during the reign of Hisham bin Abd al-Malik (105/724-125/743). There is no evidence, however, that covering the souq was a religious requirement but rather a climatic and economic one. It also seems that specialized areas within the souq developed simultaneously with, if not earlier than, the development of covered souqs and the involvement ²¹ of the state in their building.

Thus, during the Umayyad period, there were huge building programs where souqs were built and rented to shopkeepers in several Islamic cities. Examples of the early Umayyad souqs were those of al-Fustat in Egypt and al-Qayrawan in Tunisia. Later, many souqs were being built during the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258), predominantly in Iraq. Most of the Iranian bazaars were built by the Seljuks (1038-1194). After the twelfth century many souqs were built or renovated in Egypt, Syria, and Turkey by the Mamluks (1256-1517), and later by the Ottomans (1413-1914).

In general, the following points should be noted:

- The souqs developed incrementally rather than in one stage, and that it took several centuries for them to take their final character.
- In pre-Islamic cities (or in cities with pre-Islamic

origin), the souq went on in the same place only in cities where the decomposition of the original plan had already begun, such as in Aleppo and Damascus. While in other cities like Jarash (Jerasa), Tadmor (Palmyra), and Sabastia (Samaria), antiquities were preserved and the general layout of these cities was well maintained.

- It is true that Muslims have borrowed some elements from previous civilizations, but they were adapted to needs of the new cultural environment rather than exactly copied from their origin.
- There is no evidence that the souq, in its existing form, did ever exist in non-Islamic cities, even those which were founded by Greeks or Romans. Only for this reason, the term "Islamic souqs" is used in this research, and not to mean that the physical form of the souq, for example, is derived directly from Islamic religion.
- However, one should not underestimate or ignore the role of Islam on other features of the souq, such as the order of goods arrangement in terms of their location according to the Friday mosque, and the strong relationship between these two institutions (which is explained later in Chapter 3).

2.b Reasons Behind the Decline of Souqs

The decline of souqs in traditional Islamic cities may be related to the structural changes and tendencies to be found in the contemporary "Muslim" city as a whole.

During the last 50 years, if not earlier in some cases, cities in the Islamic world started changing due to the introduction of the advanced technology of the late Western industrial revolution. The rapid urbanization phenomenon has transformed the character of these cities. In most cases, this transformation meant that traditional Islamic quarters have been replaced by "modern" secular and development-oriented quarters. As a result, the traditional Islamic cities have lost much of their historic tissue, and the impact of modernization has led to a rupture of continuity between the inherited morphology and more recent urban structure. It also has led to basic changes in the social, cultural, and religious fabric of the society. In fact, many Islamic cities today have two or more urban forms with different lifestyles and physical structures. Morphological changes in the structure of traditional cities have been manifold: new suburbs were grafted onto the old quarters and in some cases completely surrounded it, leaving it as an enclave, frequently divided by modern highways, and sometimes demolished altogether.

Nowhere is the problem more severe than in the souq -the central area of the traditional city. Although, in some cases, the souq still retains part of its retailing if not manufacturing functions, in most cases it has lost its importance. Physically, socially and functionally the traditional commercial district, the souq, is no longer the center of urban life. In many cities separate commercial centers have appeared outside the historic core, and, more recently, the pattern of out-of-town shopping centers has emerged. These new central business districts have begun to absorb most of the evolving modern retailing facilities and banking functions. The bulk of retail establishments has moved from the traditional souqs to the new roads where new factories, office buildings, schools have been built.

Economic changes in the old city have been accompanied by a breakdown in social organization and the emergence of new social patterns. Wealthy upper and middle-class families were among the first to desert the old city for houses in the modern suburbs. Stores followed their customers to the suburbs. Thus, with few exceptions, the historic cores have become reception areas for large numbers of poor migrants from the countryside. Therefore, old buildings have been rapidly subdivided to absorb the growing demand for housing. As a result, not only the wealthy families but ordinary citizens left the old city because of the decline

in traditional industries and trades began to look to areas of peripheral spontaneous settlement and public housing schemes in order to escape the overcrowding and "ruralisation" of the old city.

Many old central souqs have received additions and renewal. However, these have been insufficient in keeping handicraft and commercial shops, who search for expanding room and better access for marketing, from leaving for newly founded districts and near roads leading to and from the city. These moves negatively affected the older districts, thus helping in their physical decay.

Production patterns have also been altered. Many of the small workshops located in and around the souq complex have disappeared and declined through competition from mass-produced, often imported, manufactured goods.²²

The physical reorganization of retail was but one aspect of a series of changes resulting from a shift in individual producing and retailing to corporate organizations. Guild organizations, where they existed, lost much of their former influence. The Islamic framework of society was loosened and there was a shift in the focus of city life from the religious to the secular values; thus, for example, the codes of conduct laid down for commercial transactions in Iran and Turkey before the twentieth century regulated

business deals according to a religiously-based code of ethics, to which merchants could refer. A religious judge gave advice and rulings in doubtful cases. In modern times the codes have been superseded by government regulations, which are claimed to embody the original religious principles, but which are enforced by the secular authorities.²³ The emergence of some commercial activities prohibited by religion, like bars, where alcoholic drinks may be consumed, is another example of the tendency towards the secular values. The absence of a supervisor has allowed many changes to take place in the traditional souq.

Finally, the automobile has played an important role in the deterioration of souqs. Originally, souqs were designed and built to meet the requirements of pedestrian and animal traffic. Today cars have replaced animals and pedestrians between the residential quarters and the souqs as the dominant mode of transportation. Cars are even being used for traveling to the Friday mosque. This has created traffic congestion and parking problems, not only on the outskirts, but also inside the souqs, where small trucks are sometimes used for carrying goods to the shops. The result was a wholesale destruction of large parts of the traditional city "in the name of progress," and in best cases, like in Isfahan, a major "modern" thoroughfare cuts through one of the better traditional souqs in the world.

CHAPTER 2 NOTES

1. See, for example, W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book-Lebanon, Damascus and Beyond Jordan, New York, 1886, p. 69. The author claims that the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) had borrowed the 'custom' of directing prayers (and therefore mosques) towards one place from the Jews. In fact, the concept is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and was not 'edited' by the prophet.
2. Abdulaziz Y. Saqqaf (ed.), The Middle East City, New York, 1987, p. 3.
3. Janet Abu-Lughod, "Comments on the Form of Cities: Lessons from the Islamic City," Janus: Essays in Ancient and Modern Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1975, p. 126.
4. Ibid., pp. 126-130.
5. Paul Wheatley, "Levels of Space Awareness in the Traditional Islamic City," Ekistics 253, December 1976, p. 363.
6. L. C. Brown (ed.), From Madina to Metropolis, Princeton, The Darwin Press, Inc., 1973, p. 19.
7. Riaz Hassan, "Islam and Urbanization in the Medieval Middle-East," Ekistics 195, February 1972, p. 108.
8. G. E. Von Grunebaum, "The Muslim Town," Landscape, Spring 1958, p. 4.
9. Abdulaziz Y. Saqqaf, op. cit., p. 43.
10. S. M. Stern, "The Constitution of the Islamic City," in A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern (eds.), The Islamic City, Bruno Cassirer Ltd., Oxford, 1970, p. 26.
11. See, for example, Janet Abu-Lughod, "Contemporary Relevance of Islamic Urban Principles," Ekistics 280, January/February 1980, pp. 6-10; for the same author, "The Islamic City - Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," International Journal of Middle East Studies, May 1987, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 155-173; and Friedrich R. Ragette, "The Congruence of Recent Western Design Concepts with Islamic Principles," Ekistics 280, January/February 1980, pp. 38-39.

12. A. H. Hourani, "The Islamic City in the Light of Recent Research," in A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern (eds.), *The Islamic City*, op. cit., p. 21.
13. Kenneth Brown, "The Uses of a Concept: 'The Muslim City,'" in K. Brown, M. Jole, P. Sluglett, and S. Zubaida (eds.), *Middle Eastern Cities in Comparative Perspective*, Ithaca Press, London, 1986, pp. 77-81.
14. Ibid., p. 77.
15. G. E. Von Grunebaum, "Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition," *The American Anthropologist*, Vol. 57, No. 2, The American Anthropological Association Memoir No. 81, April 1955, p. 146.
16. A. H. Hourani, op. cit., p. 12.
17. Adel A. Ismail, "Origin, Ideology and Physical Patterns of Arab Urbanization," *Ekistics* 195, February 1972, p. 118.
18. Saleh Al-Hathloul, Tradition, Continuity and Change in the Physical Environment: The Arab-Muslim City, Ph.D. dissertation, M.I.T., 1981, p. 66.
19. M. T. Houtsma, A. J. Wensinck, H. A. R. Gibb, W. Heffening and E. Levi-Provencal (eds.), First Encyclopaedia of Islam (1913-1936), Vol. VII, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1987, p. 507.
20. Saleh Al-Hathloul, op. cit., pp. 68-69.
21. Ibid., pp. 66-68.
22. R. I. Lawless, "The Future of Historic Centers: Conservation or Redevelopment?" in G. H. Blake and R. I. Lawless (eds.), *The Changing Middle Eastern City*, New York, 1980, p. 181.
23. V. F. Costello, "The Evolution of Retailing Patterns," in G. H. Blake and R. I. Lawless (eds.), *The Changing Middle Eastern City*, op. cit., p. 147.

CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING SOUQS

Islam is not merely an abstract religious faith, but it implies an entire social order and methods of conduct which virtually encompasses all aspects of daily life. In Muslim cities, it is true that the shari'a law, the ethical and spiritual principles and values which emanate directly from the faith of Islam, have had a strong influence in shaping Muslim societies, but it is equally true that other values which affected the form of these cities were not products of the faith of Islam alone. Therefore, we can not claim that the physical entity of the Islamic city was determined solely by religious values, nor can we underestimate the role of these values. However, this chapter will explain, in addition to other factors, the influence of Islamic values on some aspects of the souq.

3.a Location

Traditional souqs have occupied the same location in Islamic cities. They were always located in the center of the city around or close to the Friday mosque (Figure 4). The location of the souq in relationship to the Friday mosque was not haphazard. In cities of pre-Islamic origin, the relationship of the souq to the Friday mosque was coincidental to the relationship of the classical market street and temple site.²

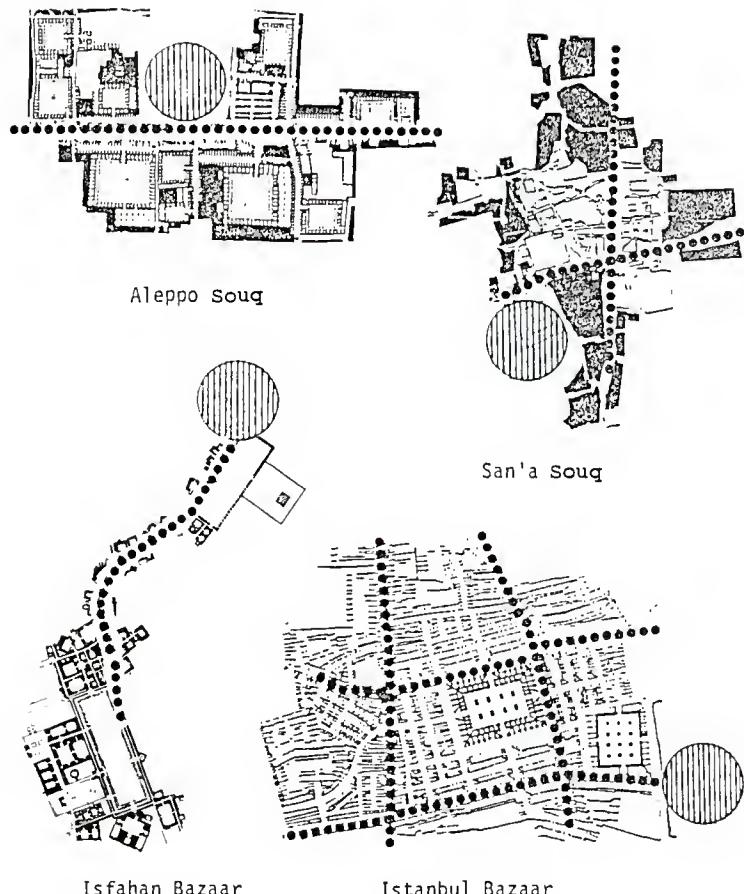


Fig. 4. The different forms of the souq's main routes in relation to the Friday Mosque. •••: main route, : Friday Mosque.

Source: Al-Naser, Ali S., Middle Eastern Souks: An Analytical Study of Middle Eastern Traditional Markets and their Future Trends, MUP thesis, University of Washington, 1985, p. 49.

In fact, the location of the souq was to follow and support principles derived, directly or indirectly, from the Islamic traditions. In order to understand the themes underlying the location of the souq, it is necessary to understand the concept behind the location of the Friday mosque, which has worked, in terms of location, as a reference not only for the souq but also for other public buildings.

In Islamic religion, prayer, at least five a day during specific times, is obligatory upon every 'responsible' Muslim, that is every adult of sound mind. Furthermore, the Prophet said: "The congregational prayer of anyone is more than twenty times in reward than his prayer in the market or in his house."³ The theme is clearly to increase the social relationships between Muslims, and to bring together in the ranks of the faithful both rich and poor, weak and powerful, without distinction and thus creating a cohesive community which acts as one body, according to the Prophet's Hadiths: "Ye will see the Muslims in their goodness, affection and fellow-feeling form as it were a single body which, when one member is ailing, seeks to share out its sleeplessness and fever throughout that body" and "Believer is to believer as the mutually upholding sections of a building."⁴

Each quarter had its own mosque or mosques, but these did not take the place of the Friday mosque where alone the Friday service, which every adult Muslim should attend, could be performed. Therefore, while local mosques acted as centers of the quarters or neighborhoods, the Friday mosque was, on a larger scale, the unifying factor which operated to consolidate all the quarters of the city, and to become not only the center of religious activities, but also the assembly place of all the Muslim inhabitants of the city.⁵ As a result, in order to give an easy and short access for pedestrians from all the residential quarters, the jami' (Friday mosque) should be located somewhere in the middle of the city.

The same principle, more social contact, was applied on souqs. To give an easy and short access, not only for the Muslims but also for other ethnic groups in the different quarters, it was necessary to locate the souq somewhere in the district of the Friday mosque, which is the center of the city. But, the reason behind locating the souq very close to or surrounding the Friday mosque was to make it easier for the shopkeepers and the shoppers to attend the congregational prayers in the mosque. Although it is preferred to be in mosque, as mentioned before, prayer can be performed in any 'clean' place. Therefore, shopkeepers, for example, can perform prayers in their shops. But for

Friday prayers, attendance at the Friday mosque is compulsory for every adult Muslim male, which means that every Muslim shopkeeper, among others, must leave his work to attend the Friday prayer. This theme is clearly mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an:

" Ye who believe!
 When the call is proclaimed
 To prayer on Friday
 (The Day of Assembly),
 Haste earnestly to the
 Remembrance
 Of God, and leave off
 Business (and traffic):
 That is best for you
 If ye but knew!"⁶

وَيَأْتِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْهَلُوا إِذَا نُذِرُوا
 لِلْخَلْقِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجَمْعَةِ
 وَلَمْ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْنَا ذَكْرَ اللَّهِ
 وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَهُ
 ذَلِكُنْ خَيْرٌ لِّلْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝

In addition, not only socially but also economically the best place to locate the souq is in the central area of the city, which is also the best place for other buildings. In short, the souq's location supported the interaction and unity of secular and religious life in the Islamic city on one hand, and economically provided the most attractive place for retail commercial activities on the other.

Today, in many Muslim cities, the relationship between the Friday mosque and the commercial area is not as strong as it was in the past. The Friday mosque is no longer the heart of the city, because of the shift in the focus of city life from the religious to the secular values.

3.b Social and Economic Aspects

Since the end of the seventh century until the decline of the Ottoman dynasty, trade had largely contributed to financial life within the Muslim world. Souqs, in Islamic cities, were the arena of economic life and each city had its own souq; the larger the city, the bigger the souq. They were, for a period of time, a major source of income not only for the city but also for the government. They were sometimes established as governmental investments. Some early Islamic dynasties, like the Umayyads and the Abbassids, have built huge souqs and rented them to the different guilds. Other souqs were built incrementally by private interests, such as the case during the Mamluk and Ottoman dynasties, and were then donated for the waqf. In the obvious economic sense, the souq also brought together the residents of the city and of the surrounding villages.

Souqs, together with the Friday mosque, formed the twin poles of Islamic urban life, separate but in harmony. In the souq area, not only commercial, but religious and political life were concentrated. From within or near the souq, the gadis, the notaries, and the muhtasibs, as well as other public officials operated. Within the souq area, shops and mosques and schools and offices were mixed together. Prayer, learning, and public consultations and

adjudication were part of the everyday life of the working population. The scholar who worked part time as a merchant or craftsman wanted to be near his teacher. The artisan who prayed regularly had his mosque at hand. The merchant who served as a notary found the qadi or the muhtasib in the immediate vicinity. Thus the physical facilities were juxtaposed to permit easy movement from one to another.⁸

In a social sense, souqs permitted the integration of the various levels -commercial, religious, and political- of urban activity. They provided the essential interface and exchange among inhabitants of adjacent neighborhoods. Along with mosques, they were the only place where various segments of the urban population came into contact with each other. Moreover, souqs were the only public place where Muslim men and women and foreigners were allowed to interact socially. In fact, souqs presented a particular kind of economy, a way of producing and consuming goods and services and a distinctive system of social relationships. The elements of this system are coherent and imply one another. These elements, according to Geertz, are:

"..., a finely drawn division of labor and a sharp localization of markets, inhomogeneity of products and intensive bargaining over prices, extreme fractionalization of transactions and stable clientship ties between buyers and sellers, itinerant trading and extensive traditionalization of occupation in ascriptive terms, the personal nature of reputation and the preference for partnerships over relations of employer-employee."⁹

In the souq, people can be classified in three groups: First; those who either pass through the souq to the mosque and other facilities, or come to the souq for shopping. Second; merchants, craftsmen, and those who are involved in supportive roles (i.e. auctioneers, brokers and porters). This group also includes those who have kiosks or carts. And third; foreign traders who come to sell their goods in the souq.

The relationships between these groups as well as between the members of the same group were based on a set of tacit moral and ethical rules.¹⁰ These rules were a reflection of the spiritual world of Islam and have been working, to some extent, up today. Because of these rules, positive human relationships develop between the seller and his customers which benefit both. It allows the customer to build up a continuing business relationship, and creates more business for the seller. And it explains the seller's satisfaction, even in the absence of adequate profit -the result of the Islamic value of dependency on God for one's destiny and fortunes after and above trying one's best. For, Muslim shopkeepers believe that prosperity is not to be measured by wealth or worldly gains, and there is a higher prosperity -the health of the mind and the spirit. They also believe that the immediate and temporal worldly gain may be the ultimate and spiritual loss, and vice versa.

Therefore, the rule which Muslim shopkeepers realize is:

"If one leads a righteous and sober life, God will provide for him in all senses, better than any provision he can possibly think of."¹¹

In Islamic religion, cheating in business is prohibited, and it is illegal for one to sell a thing if he knows that it has a defect, unless he informs the buyer of that defect.¹² As a result, for the shopkeeper, the customer is not just a buyer, he becomes a friend-customer. The idea then is to reduce profits in order to attract more friend-customers. In fact, one can say that the more honest and trustful the shopkeeper, the more friend-customers he can make. Thus, one can understand why most shopkeepers place small chairs inside or in front of their shops for their customers, and sometimes offer them something (coffee or tea) to drink.

Among the second group, there is a high degree of mutual confidence. It is a matter of principle not to be jealous of a neighbor's trade. This friendly relationship allowed the shopkeeper to display his goods outside the shop limits with no clear separation between his and neighbors' goods, to the extent that the buyer, sometimes, can not know which goods belong to each shop. It is not unusual to see a group of shopkeepers having their meals, especially the breakfast, or drink tea and converse together. Moreover, the

shopkeeper who wants to go to the mosque or to have his lunch at home or even to go to the bathrooms, instead of closing his shop, he would either ask his neighbor to keep an eye on his shop, or place a chair in the entrance of the shop to indicate that the shopkeeper is not there at the moment and will be back soon.

The third group consists of foreign traders who come to the city to buy or sell goods. Before introducing the automobile, many foreign traders had to stay in the city for at least one night. They also needed a place where they could display and sell their goods. Thus, khans or wakalat were built in the Islamic city to accommodate foreign merchants and their goods. There, traders found lodging and store for their merchandise until such time as they could dispose of them. Some khans also provided food and other temporary service for merchants. Khans became of vital importance to the movement of trade, and the number of khans built in a city at a given time provides a good index to its commercial prosperity. Because of their function and occupants, khans in some cases were located close to the souq, while in others they were near the city gates. Most of these khans had only one entrance and were locked off from the rest of the city during the night. Today, because of easy transportation, foreign traders do not have to stay in the city and khans no longer play their original role.

Sometimes, foreign traders display their goods on sidewalks or near a cluster of shops or in any vacant place which might be appropriate for their work.

A significant feature of life in the larger urban souqs was the craft guilds, which regulated the quantity and quality of a particular manufactured good sold in the souq of the city. Enjoying protection of the state, they became instruments of control on the economic activities of populations. The number of shops per profession, movement from one grade to another in the guild's hierarchy, and the prices of different goods were carefully regulated. The emergence of these guilds protected both their members and the buyers. They provided training as well as capital for their members. These guilds elected from the members their own representatives to supervise the implementation of guild regulations and resolutions. They were also associated with many religious and social functions, but it was their fiscal and administrative roles which were of 13 most importance. The relationship among members of a particular guild was more or less that of brotherhood. As mentioned before, it was a matter of principle not to be jealous of a neighbor's trade, but, on the contrary, to be happy about it. The organization of the souqs which kept merchants and artisans of each trade together surely created informal ties. Another basis for solidarity existed

in the attachment of workers to particular local mosques to the extent that many mosques bore the name of the trade of ¹⁴ their market. In Islamic guilds, masters and craftsmen remained of the same class and in close personal contact. A distinct feature of the Islamic guilds was that, unlike the European guilds, they were not exclusive and they did not habitually exclude non-Muslims. In short, the Islamic guild system was an informal economic and social organization, and was a spontaneous development from below, created not in response to state need, but to serve the ¹⁵ social requirements of the laboring masses themselves. ¹⁶ Today, guild organizations, where they exist, lost much of their former influence.

3.c Spatial and Functional Activities

Souqs exhibited everywhere in Islamic lands the same general structure, where craftsmen of the same occupation and traders of the same kind of goods were always clustered in the same area of the souq. In fact, each occupation or trade was likely to have its own lane completely. It is reported that specialized areas within the souq did exist in the early cities founded by Muslims -i.e. al-Kufah, Samarra and Baghdad. Describing the souqs of Baghdad, al-Yaqubi observed that for the traders of each specific good or service there were defined lanes, and that no group or

trade mixed with any other nor was a category being sold with another category. He also noticed that the crafts within the market area were kept separate from each other,
¹⁷ with each type of craft having its own lane. However, the concentration of craft types together might be caused by the need for different craftsmen to complete individual processes in the making of a product which had several stages of work involved in its composition.

More important still, the order in which each occupation took its place in the souq was substantially similar in every Muslim town:

"Near the mosque as a religious center we will find the suppliers of the sanctuary, the [souq] of the candle merchants, the dealers in incense and other perfumes. Near the mosque as an intellectual center we will find also the [souq] of the booksellers, the [souq] of the bookbinders, and, as its neighbor, the [souq] of the leather merchants and the makers of slippers, all of whom are in one way or another concerned with leather goods. Adjoining this group of markets we enter the halls of the dealers in textiles, the *gaisariyya*, the only section of the [souqs] which is regularly roofed and which can be locked and where, therefore, precious materials other than fabrics will also be stored and exchanged.

... Next to the textile trade the carpenters, locksmiths, and the producers of copper utensils will be located; and somewhat farther from the center, the smiths. Approaching to the gates of the town one will find, apart from the caravanserais for the people from the rural districts, the makers of saddles and those of pack-saddles whose clients are recruited from amongst those very country people. Then the vendors of victuals brought in from the country who sometimes will form a market outside the

gates, together with the basket makers, the sellers of spun wool and the like. On the periphery of the town will be situated such industries as require space and whose vicinity might be considered undesirable; the dyers, the tanners, and almost outside the city limits, the potters."¹⁸

The number and nature of specialized souqs in the market depended upon the size and nature as well as the location of the city. If the city was of a large size as well as a seat of government it was likely to have a larger number of souqs of various goods.

Looking at the order in which the several trades followed one another in the layout of souqs (Figure 5), at least a three-level hierarchy can be identified. At the first level of the hierarchy are the "positive" trades or products to be found around or close to the Friday mosque, such as musk or perfume products. In contrast the second category, the "negative", consists of those which were located around the gates or even outside the city limits, such as the blacksmiths. The third category is that of "neutral" products which were located with relative freedom within the hierarchy. Of course, one might think of a fourth category which did not have any place at all in the souq. It consists of those products prohibited by Islamic religion, such as alcohol, dead animals, pigs, idols and pictures.

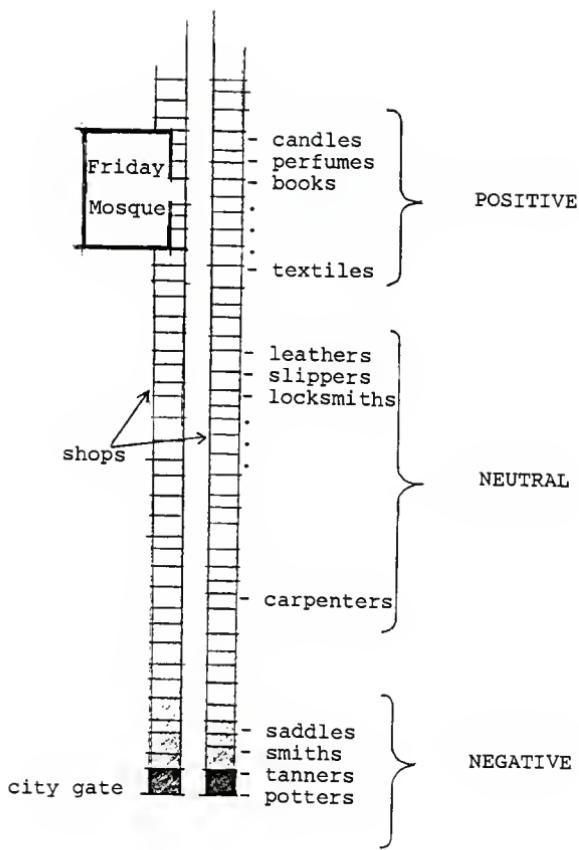


Fig. 5. Diagram showing the typical arrangement of goods in the souq.

Source: Author's observation.

Interestingly enough, the Prophet Mohammad used the same concept as example to show the difference between the good companion and the bad one. He said:

"The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your cloths or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof."²¹

Thus, it is clear that businesses caused harm or damage or whose byproducts were either smoke or offensive odors, like smiths, were undesirable to be located near the Friday mosque or in the residential areas. Islamic traditions therefore encourage an ecological attitude towards land use and the public well being.

Since many changes in souq localization eventually took place over the centuries, it is hard to trace the original or exact location of each kind of trades. However, at least three major themes can be identified as underlying the regulation pertaining to the location of goods and services in the souq. First, the concept of similarity has been applied to the market arrangement. Second, the relative frequency of the needs of the inhabitants for certain products was instrumental in choosing their locations. Third, and probably the most important, the concept of causing harm or damage to anyone seems to have been

decisive in determining the location of industries and in separating them from residential areas within the city. This concept was developed from the Tradition of the Prophet which states "There shall be no damage and no mutual inflection of damage."²² Other factors such as the symbolic content of the products, the attitude of the shari'a towards them, and their need of space, seem to have affected the location of these goods or products.

In fact, the division of the souq by trades and crafts had several advantages. As for the retailers themselves, the grouping gave them a greater opportunity to organize themselves and to control their trade. It also has created informal ties between merchants. The grouping system gave the shopper an opportunity to inspect the goods at close hand and compare the quality and prices of the goods displayed in different shops within a limited area with little effort. Also, the grouping together of retailers of similar goods made it easier for the muhtasib to control the quality of goods and to collect taxes. Finally, it is clear that merchants followed the principle "a group of stores carrying the same merchandise will do more business if they are clustered together than if they were widely scattered."²³

Today, commercial activities are distributed in cities of

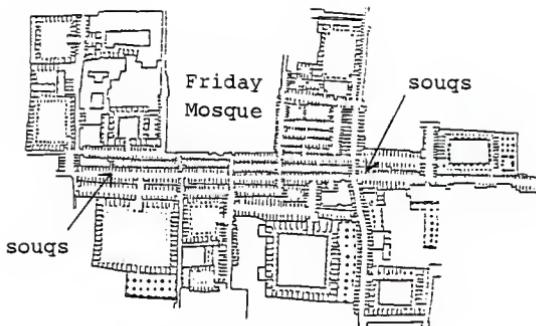
Islamic countries with no order. Although some parts of souqs still bear the name of goods or products that used to be sold there -i.e. Souq al-Qattanin (the cotton market) and Souq al-Basal (the onion market), these goods are not necessarily found in their respective souqs. This disorganization is the result of many changes that took place in the whole city in general, and in the commercial areas in particular. Some of the factors which have led to the new reorganization are: the emergence of commercial centers competing with the traditional souqs, the flood of imported goods, the disappearance of local handicrafts and the appearance of new products, the neglect of important buildings in the souq, the changing pattern of the retailing system, the absence of a supervisor, and the looseness of the Islamic framework of society. The arrangement of goods in a hierarchical way can no longer be seen in the souq. In some cases, when some merchants grow wealthy they move closer to the center of the souq, while others less fortunate move outward to the margins. However, it seems that the concept of avoiding harm or damage is, to some extent, still being adopted. For, one can notice that most of auto-repair shops and blacksmiths are located on the periphery of the city. It is also of interest to find doctors, lawyers, dentists and other professionals, being concentrated in the same four or five streets.

3.d Architectural Characteristics

Layout:

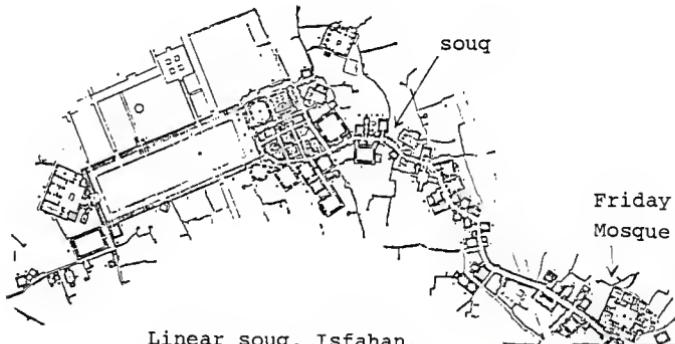
Two patterns of souq's layout can be identified; linear souqs or a network of souqs (Figure 6). The linear one, as in Isfahan, consists basically of one major route with shops on both sides. It usually extends from the Friday mosque to the main gate or opposite gates linking the other supporting facilities which are normally located along the "spine". The second is a city in miniature, like the souqs of Aleppo and Tunisia, consisting of dozens of streets intersecting at right angles. Unlike the linear souq, shops are here clustered either back to back along a common party wall, or around an inner space utilized for various purposes (Figure 7). The whole area can be locked up by a minimum number of strategic gates.

The height of each souq is in proportion to its width; usually the height is twice the width. The primary souqs (lanes), which normally connect the major gates to the souq area, are usually wider, longer, and higher than the secondary lanes. The minor lanes, in most cases, do not progress exactly perpendicularly, but rather deviate to the right or left and disappear around blind bends. The idea behind that, it seems, is to reduce conflict of traffic to a minimum.



Network of souqs, Aleppo.

Source: Antoniou, Jim, Islamic Cities and Conservation, 1981, p. 28.



Source: Burckhardt, Titus, Art of Islam: Language and Meaning, 1976, p. 184.

Fig. 6. Patterns of souqs' layout.



Fig. 7. Clustering of shops for a typical network of souqs, Tunisia.

Source: Hakim, Besim S., The Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles, 1986, p. 135.

Every stall in the souq is an architectural envelope tailored to the needs of the inhabitating human, granting him protection and identity. A noticeable feature of shops in the main thoroughfares is their relatively narrow frontages. The size of each shop depends on the kind of merchandise it contains. The gold and jewelery shops for example, are very small, sometimes not more than 1 meter wide by 1.5 meters deep, as in San'a souq. Very often shops would be no more than three meters wide; enough for the craftsman to be seated at his work and to have most of his products on sale within easy reach. The flooring was usually raised 2 or 3 feet above ground level and was frequently extended into the street by a bench. This may be in order to protect the shop from any floods or to keep the merchandise at pedestrian eye level. The shop was closed at night by two or three horizontal shutters; the top shutter could form an awning, and the lower ones could be folded back to serve as a counter, a display stand, or a ²⁴ divan. Each shop advertises its products at the vendor's discretion, sometimes by lavishly displaying them on the front of the shop and occasionally across the width of the souq street if it is narrow enough. Every available wall surface is used for displaying goods. It is sometimes hard to find one's way in the souq after business hours even though a person may be familiar with a particular location

owing to the radical change in the visual environment when the souq is closed. In the covered parts of the souq, all shop fronts are of similar size with similar wooden gates and sometimes uniform colors.

The transition point between two different merchandising souqs usually occurs at the cross-points of the main routes of the souq network. This area is either covered with a dome higher than the surrounding ones or open to the sky. It was also used as a landmark to indicate the location of other buildings. Small water pools are sometimes located in this area. They help modify the souq's micro-climate during the hot summers. Other drinking basins to be found in the souq are the sabils, which means free drinking water. They are provided as charitable foundations by pious citizens and maintained by the waqf.

One of the most important components of the souq is the gaysariyya. Although it was usually located at the heart of the complex, in linear souqs like the Isfahan Bazaar, it is located at one end of the spine. The gaysariyya consisted basically of an oblong hall, roofed and colonnaded, often domed, with a door at one or both of the short sides that was securely locked at night. It was utilized for the sale of precious objects, especially textiles, or for wholesale trade.

Shape

Souqs are architecturally very simple and usually consist of a series of vaults or domes to the extent that one can trace their boundaries by surveying their rooftops, as shown in (Figure 8). The roof is usually not more than two stories high. Shops usually occupy the lower levels, while the upper levels, which sometimes have openings to the shopping streets, belong to adjacent houses or public buildings or even to the shops beneath as a storage area.

The souq structure does not stand alone, but rather as part of the continuous organic pattern of the Islamic urban environment. Souqs usually have many entrances, major and minor ones. The major entrances connect the souqs to the Friday mosque and the residential areas. While minor ones lead to the nearby facilities -madrasas, local mosques, hammams and khans. These entrances are distinguished by their arched gates with Quranic scripts.

In many cases, the qaysariyya is the focus of the souq and is usually more architecturally developed than the other parts of the souq.

Inside the souq, the tunnel effect is softened by the merchandise displays where goods come to the customers and not the opposite. The method of advertising exists in the



the domed roof line of the *bāzār* ↗

Fig. 8. Rooftops of a souq, Isfahan.

Source: Burckhardt, Titus, op. cit., p. 194.

actual sights, sounds, and smells, abundance, variety and values of the merchandise. Because individual shops in the souq rarely use written placards for advertising, the souq during business hours is visually very different from when it is closed.

Natural light enters the souq either from rows of small circular or square-shaped openings located at the upper center of the roof domes, or from rows of arched windows located in the upper sides of the aisles (Figure 9). These apertures also create a cool and well ventilated space that is ideal for hot climates.

Technology and materials

Local building materials were utilized throughout the construction of the different souqs. In Isfahan Bazaar, mudbrick is the material of which the seemingly endless domes, supported by pointed arches, are constructed. It is laid in imaginative and sometimes highly intricate patterns, especially where streets cross and a higher dome crowns the intersection. In other regions where it is available, such as in Syria and Turkey, stone was the predominant building material. It was used in Aleppo souq and Istanbul Bazaar. The interior walls were either plastered with mud or decorated with locally produced ceramic tile.



Source: Sharon, A.,
Planning Jerusalem,
p. 163.

Source: Ardalan, Nader and
Bakhtiar, L., The Sense of
Unity, 1973, p. 112.

Fig. 9. Openings for light.

3.e Supporting Communal and Cultural Institutions

Along the souq, behind the rows of shops, we could find a series of public buildings, each is a separate world by itself. Mosques, madrasas, hammams (public baths), and khans (or wakalat) could be found in every section of the souq. These facilities supported the livability of the souq and, at the same time, acted as buffer zones between the busy souqs and the surrounding residential areas. The inhabitants had to pass through the souq in order to get into these buildings, since the only access was, in most cases, from the souq itself. Despite the difference in size, the common feature between these buildings, except the hammam, is the courtyard. This group of courtyards, carved out of the building mass, formed the major positive spaces, or figural voids, in the dense continuous tissue of the traditional Islamic city.

Among these buildings, khans were the most associated with the souq in terms of their function. As mentioned earlier, they were planned to accommodate foreign traders and their goods. Khans, the urban equivalent of the caravanserais, were scattered around the souq or near the city gates in such a way that each group of similar merchandise had its own khan. They were generally two or three storeys high and rectangular or square in plan, with

a central courtyard and single portal. The chambers for merchants, where their goods could also be deposited, were usually in the upper floors, while the ground floor was originally used for stables and sometimes as storage. In most cases, khans had shops on the exterior as part of the ²⁶ souq. The courtyards of khans were well-designed landscape areas where trees, fountains or pools could be found. In some cases, a small mosque or bath was located somewhere in the courtyard. The guard room existed on one side of the entrance from which he could control traffic to and from the khan. Khans were built by officials and private individuals as pious works endowed for the benefit of a particular quarter or a religious institution. Today khans are no longer used for merchants' lodgings or for manufacture. They are now used as storages or workshops, or subdivided to house migrants.

Mosques in the souq area are usually small in size, with open courtyards in most cases. Usually each mosque was associated with the nearby guild and was frequently used by ²⁷ members of that group. In some cases, the exterior wall of the mosque forms one side of the street, while in other cases, mosques are separated from the souq by a row of shops built along the exterior wall of the mosque. The minarets of these mosques can not be seen from the souq, and some do not have minarets at all.

In the Islamic city, it is normal to find many madrasas (schools) around the mosques and in the souq area, since their function was originally to teach the Islamic sciences and law. A typical madrasa would consist of rooms at two levels located around the courtyard and separated from it by an arcade. Usually the upper level was used as student dormitories and the lower level for teaching religious classes and cultural seminars. The prayer room or mosque of the madrasa was usually prominently located, sometimes opposite the main entrance with its qibla wall facing the direction of Mecca. The ablution area was usually located on one side of the courtyard or behind the rooms. The court facades were, in some cases, designed with iwans ranging in number from one to four. A central pool and trees can also be found in the courtyard of the madrasa.
²⁸

Another familiar aspect of any Islamic souq is the public bath or hammam, whether identified by only its smoking chimney and a low glass-studded dome or by the most splendid of domed structures rising above the level of the surrounding souqs. The hammam had a ritualistic role in the performance of prayer. It is part of the sunnah that every Muslim should bathe before performing the Friday prayer. The hammam was a place for informal business discussions and a place for recreation and relaxation. From the outside, the hammam like many other structures of the

Islamic city was massive and windowless, the only opening was a small door so as to keep inside the heat and steam of the bath. In some cases, as in Isfahan hammams, the exterior entrance walls were hung with brightly colored towels to indicate the location of the hammam. Inside the hammam a variety of spaces were provided: cold rooms, warm rooms, hot rooms, and changing rooms.

In some Islamic cities a kind of health institution called bimaristan or muristan, a Persian term, was developed and built within the souq area. It was both a health center and a medical school. The layout of the typical bimaristan was square or rectangular in shape; the patients' rooms around a central courtyard with a surrounding arcade which provided covered access to all the rooms. The entrance was approximately on the axis of the courtyard and was through a covered passage flanked by built-in seats for the patient's visitors and by a room for the guard. Another door from the passage led directly to the courtyard. A small prayer room was usually located opposite the entrance on the other side of the court. A link was provided from one of the arcades to an isolated unit with rooms for those who had leprosy. Bimaristans were generously endowed with money and food from private sources and the authorities.

3.f Management and Ownership Pattern

Guilds played an important role in the management of the souqs. Each guild had its own president or sheikh, and at the head of all the guilds was the Sheikh al-Tujjar, the merchants sheikh. Since he could not attend all meetings, Sheikh al-Tujjar usually sent his representative, the arif or naqib. Recently, these guilds have been replaced by the chambers of commerce, although they do not play the same role.

The state's administrative role in the souq was through the person of the muhtasib (which may be translated as the supervisor of markets and public morality). His function was conceived as part of a general communal obligation to promote good and restrain evil, i.e. to practice al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar. As an official for the supervision of moral standards, social behaviour and public security, the muhtasib watched the performance of such religious duties as Friday prayers or the fast, on correct behaviour between men and women on the streets, the safety of buildings and the cleanliness of roads. At market places and street stalls he supervised the honesty of commercial transactions and the manufacture of goods by craftsmen, eliminating frauds and unfair competition, supervised 29 weights and measures and regulated prices.

Moreover, he had an important part in the collection of market taxes. A related function of the muhtasib was the arbitration of disputes between, for example, craftsmen and employers. The role of the muhtasib extended to include the responsibility of ensuring the cleanliness of the water supply and its fair distribution between the different quarters of the city and its inhabitants. He also ensured that mosques and hammams were kept clean. In view of the variety and multiplicity of his functions, the muhtasib naturally needed the help of a wide network of aides and assistants. Thus, he appointed an arif or amin for each trade or craft as its overseer in order to watch over the quality and fairness of services rendered to the clientele of his respective sector.

This institution, which was considered a religious one, survived into the dawn of the modern age. Then it gradually died out, as part of its functions were handed over to officials of the police or the municipal authorities, others to the qadi (the judge), and others simply became obsolete as the public became ever more intransigent to normal censure as being, partly under the influence of Western concepts, an intrusion on the freedom of the individual.

The ownership pattern of the souqs has rarely been documented, but there is no doubt that the waqf played a

very important role in its development. This institution operated, rented and maintained the souqs as well as other public buildings.

Today, although the waqf still own some parts, the ownership pattern of the souqs is hard to determine because of the complexity of the many parties involved in the ownership of different shops within the souq.

CHAPTER 3 NOTES

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27. See Note 14.
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CHAPTER 4. DETAILED CASE STUDIES

4.a Bazaar of Isfahan

Isfahan enjoyed its height of prosperity during the reign of the Safavid Dynasty and specifically during the Shah Abbas ruling period (1587-1629), who moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1597.

The location of Isfahan on the main east-west trading routes greatly contributed to the development of the city and its bazaar. According to Sherban Cantacuzino, Isfahan was divided into four quarters by axial bazaar routes, similar to the cardo and decumanus of a Roman city, with the Maidan-i-Qadim (the old square) and the Friday Mosque ¹ at the center. After the Maidan-i-Shah was built, the functions of the old square were transferred and the bazaar routes were modified to connect the new square with the Friday Mosque, thus forming the primary movement system of the city, (Figure 10).

The major spine can be divided into three main sections; Maidan-i-Qadim with Masjid-i-Jami' (the Friday Mosque) at the north end of the bazaar route, the main route of the bazaar which goes in an organic way south to the Qaysariyya (the main focus of the bazaar route), and Maidan-i-Shah with Masjid-i-Shah at the south end, (Figure 11).

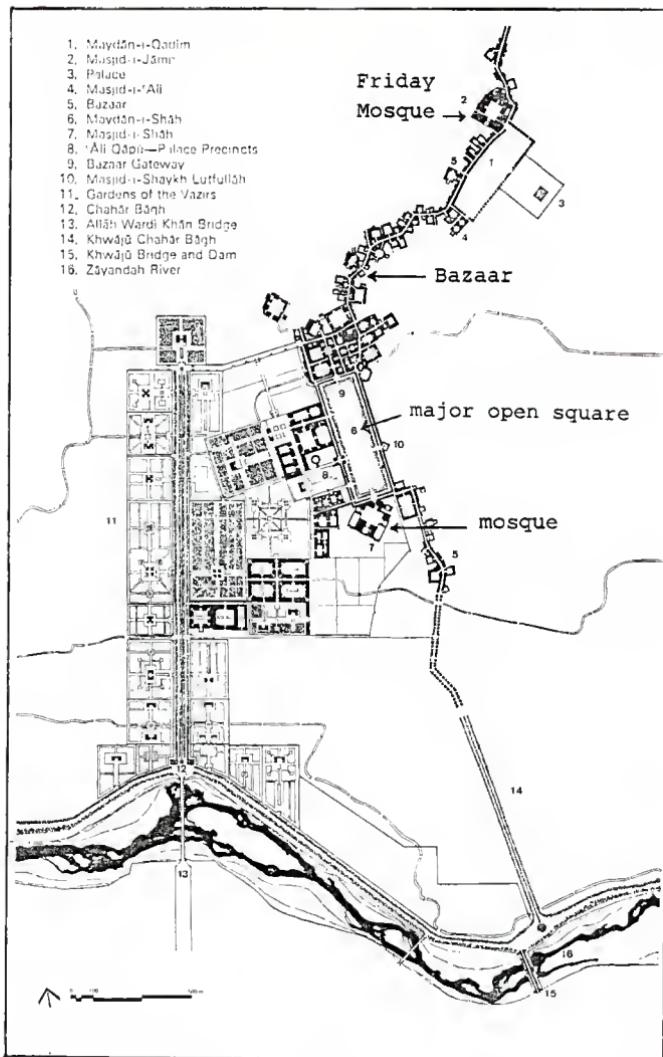


Fig. 10. Main movement in Isfahan.

Source : Ardalan, Nader and Bakhtiar, L., op. cit., p. 127.

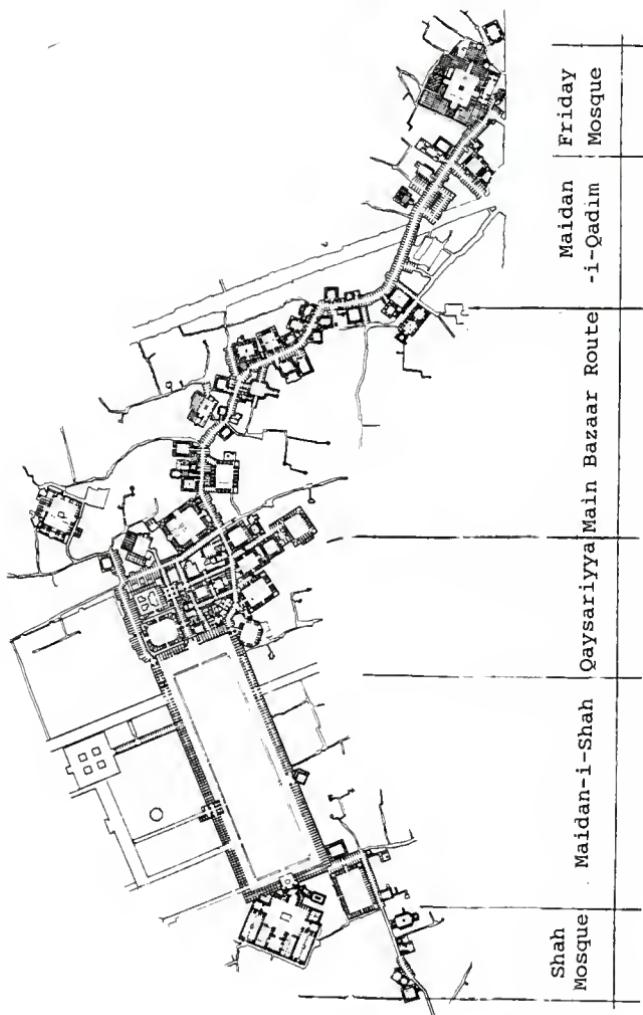


Fig. 11. Plan of the Bazaar of Isfahan.

Source : Burckhardt, Titus, op. cit., p. 184.

"The bazaar space is a modular matrix of a domed central circulation space parallel to which are located the dependent spaces of shops."² When seen from the roof, the bazaar's skeleton is hidden under a covering layer of small domes and roofs of sun-dried mudbrick and straw plaster. Only a line of domes traces the twisting route of the vaulted bazaar beneath, (Figure 12).

One of the features that make the bazaar of Isfahan as one of the great spatial sequences of the world is the use of space and materials. Nothing is wasted; everything has a purpose, producing an essentially human environment with a sculptural plasticity and unity.³ It is a dark, cool world lit only by shafts of sunlight from clerestory and rooflight. The dark and light sequences of space maintain a continuity which is enriched throughout its length by the events which occur along the way, some big and important,⁴ some small and delicate.

Inside, the tunnel effect is softened by the merchandise displayed. Describing one segment of the bazaar, Kenneth Browne says:

"Festoons of scarves are strung across and skeins of gorgeously coloured wools hang from great hooks, alongside piles of carpets and bales of brilliantly dyed cloth - regiments of brightly coloured shoes march up the shop walls, towers of bowls, cascades of oil lamps. It is a kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, smells with everywhere the aroma of spices, leather, baking bread, grilling meat. There are



Fig. 12. Aerial view of Isfahan showing the Friday Mosque and the domed roof line of the bazaar.

Source : Ardalani, N. and Bakhtiar, L., op. cit., p. 104.

piles of scarlet pomegranates and shiny pink candy, magenta hookah pipes coiled like snakes and down a side alley dyevats and lengths of fabric hung out to dry."⁵

Since many changes took place over centuries, it is hard to trace the original location of each group of goods. The current location of goods is determined by both the need and value. Goods bought daily, for example, are located near the Friday Mosque and around the Maidan-i-Qadim, the main communal gathering area in the city. Luxury goods are located in the Qaysariyya area, north to Maidan-i-Shah.

Specialized souqs are clearly defined in the Qaysariyya area (Figure 13), where a series of "go" spaces intersect under a "chahar su" (four arches), creating significant encounter points. Over each street crossing, or chahar su, rises a dome of exceptional height (Figure 14) often above a central fountain pool. Between each chahar su, located approximately 40 meters apart, the different crafts, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, tanners and so on are grouped together each giving its name to a special section of bazaar defined by its own gateway.⁶

Connected to the central spine of the bazaar are the khans (caravanserais), hammams (public baths), madrasas (religious schools), and shrines and mosques. Each is a separate world perfectly adapted to its purpose yet all

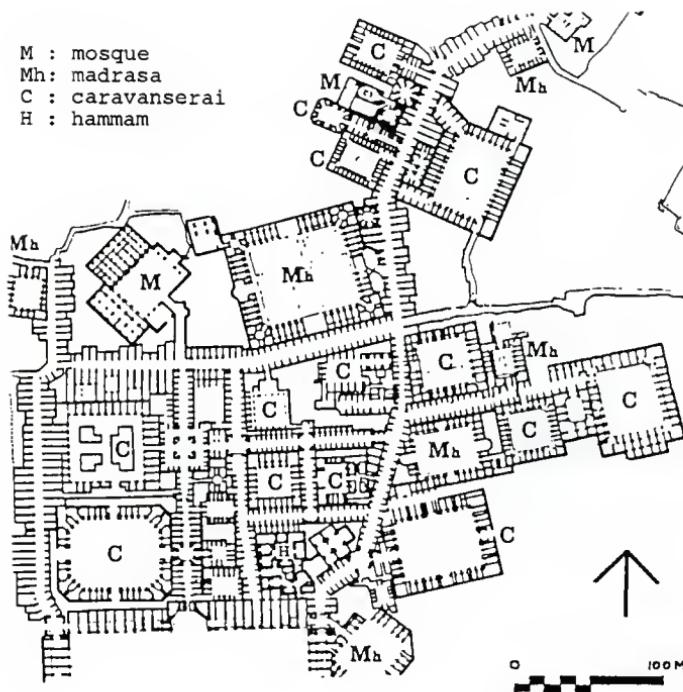


Fig. 13. Plan of the Qaysariyya at the south end of the bazaar route north to Maidan-i-Shah, (Isfahan).

Source : Cantacuzino, S. and Browne, K., "Isfahan," Architectural Review, May 1976, p. 266.

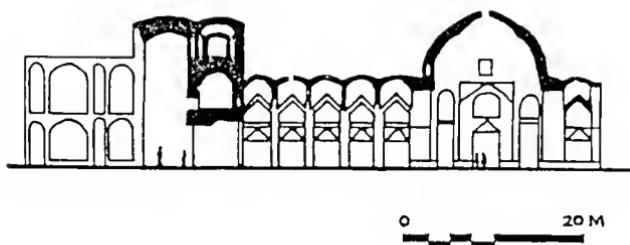


Fig. 14. Section through the bazaar at the Qaysariyya entrance from Maidan-i-Shah, Isfahan.

Source: K. Browne and S. Cantacuzino, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

close bound to Muslim commercial and religious life. Together they form an organism with a life of its own fed by supply routes extending far into the surrounding countryside. These spaces vary in size but are nearly always planned around a central courtyard, which has, in most cases, a central pool and trees planted in the four quadrants, see (Figures 15-18).

Mosques within the bazaar are used for daily prayers by the trades and crafts people within the immediate area. They are quite often related to the particular craft or trade located in that segment of the bazaar. Thus, it is not uncommon to see members of a craft group praying together, completing their sense of communal unity and

Legend for the following four maps.

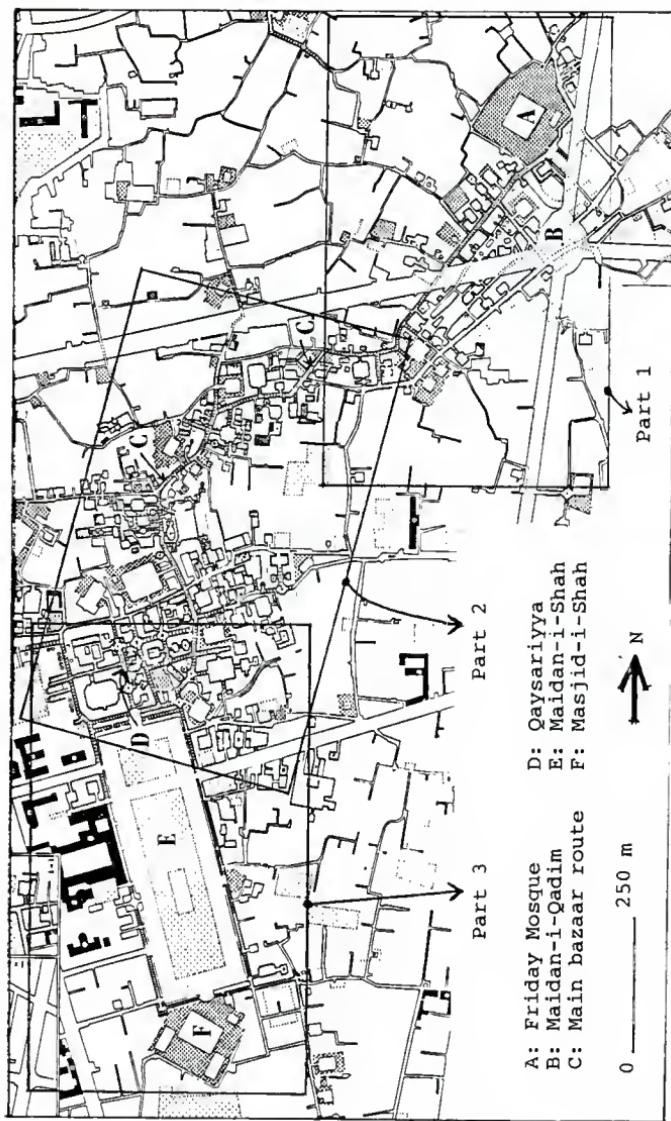


Fig. 15. The Bazaar of Isfahan.

Source : Gauße, H. and Wirth, E., Der Bazaar von Isfahan (in German), 1978, karte 1.

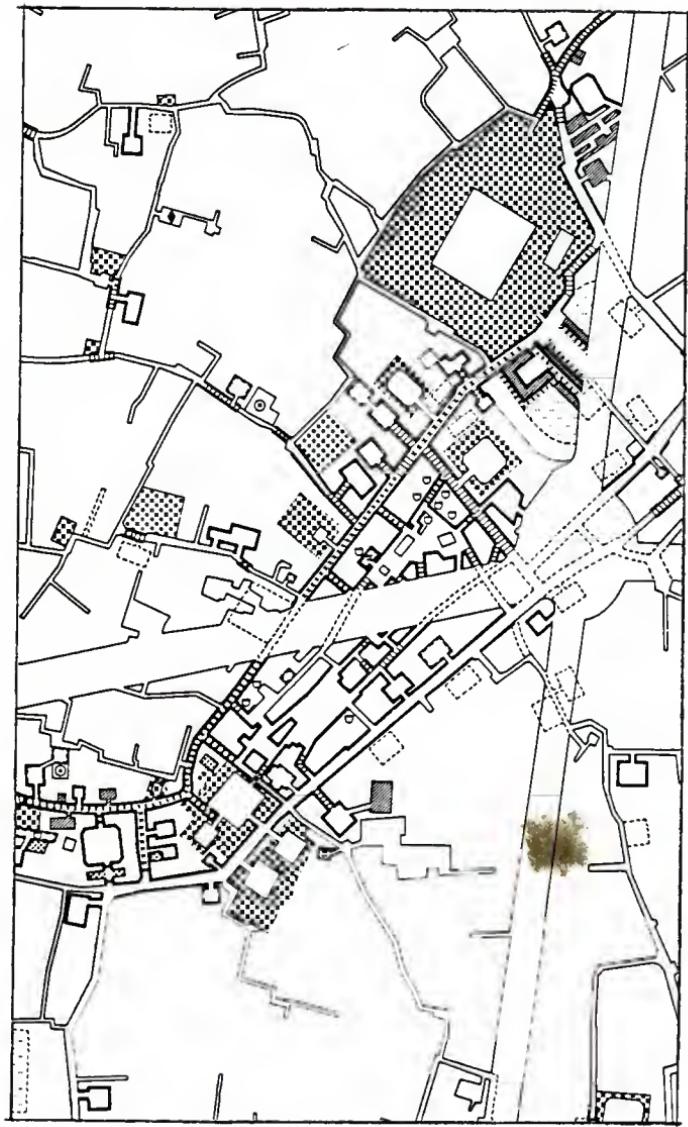


Fig. 16. Part 1: The Friday Mosque and Maidan-i-Qadim, Isfahan.
Source : Gaube, H. and Wirth, E., op. cit., Karte 1.

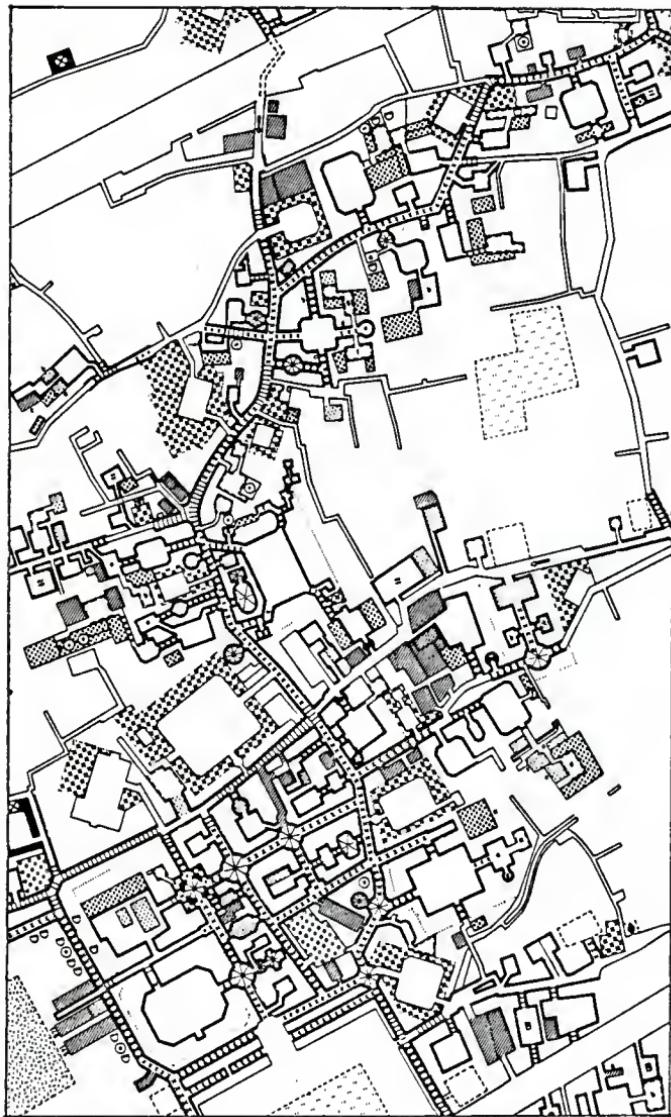


Fig. 17. Part 2: Main bazaar route and the Qaysariyya, Isfahan.

Source : Gaube, H. and Wirth, E., op. cit., karte 1.

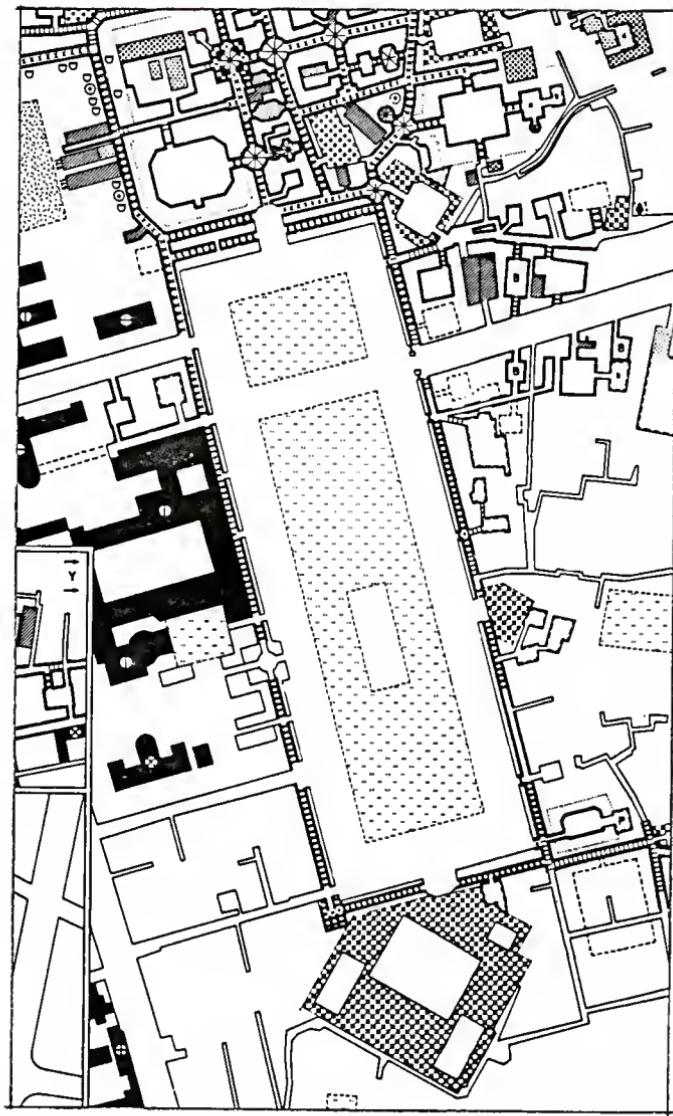


Fig. 18. Part 3: Maidan-i-Shah and the Shah Mosque, Isfahan.

Source : Gaube, H. and Wirth, E., op. cit., karte 1.

showing the close link existing between the religious and
7
commercial life of the city.

Nowadays, the bazaar still has its importance as a place for shopping and recreation for the people of Isfahan. The shops still function but their land use specializations are violated in many parts of the bazaar. Hammams also still function and many people still use this public facility for bathing. Khans, or caravanserais, are being used as storage spaces and are rarely inhabited. One caravanserai was renovated and transformed into an international "palace",
8
the Shah Abbas Hotel. The physical structure of the bazaar did not change except that part of the bazaar main route was destroyed in the early 1970s and used as part of a perpendicular vehicular road ("Abdorrazaq Avenue"). This disrupted the continuity of the bazaar route and created an unsafe zone of pedestrians traveling between the two parts.

4.b Souqs of Aleppo

Aleppo is one of the few important centers of long distance trade in the Old World. The city is situated in the heart of an area of intensive economic interaction between the east and the west. Not only do the splendid buildings of the late Middle Ages bear witness to Aleppo's great prosperity, but the spatial organization within the old city as a whole is a unique document of urban self-consciousness in the Islamic world. The souqs of Aleppo are some of the finest and best preserved in the Islamic world. They date from the thirteenth century and have not been rebuilt.

J. Sauvaget traced the original grid-iron plan which has survived in the souq area of the old city (Figures 19,20). The decumanus still forms the main axis between the western gate, Bab Antakia, and the citadel, passing through the south side of the agora or forum (Figure 21). The temple, which stood on the western side of the agora in Seleucid times, was rebuilt as a cathedral during the Byzantine period and later to be converted into a madrasa during the Islamic rule. When the Arabs came they built a small mosque under a triumphal arch, announcing a new era for the city, and otherwise left the city as it was, until Caliph Suleyman ibn Abdel Malek decided in 715 to build a mosque

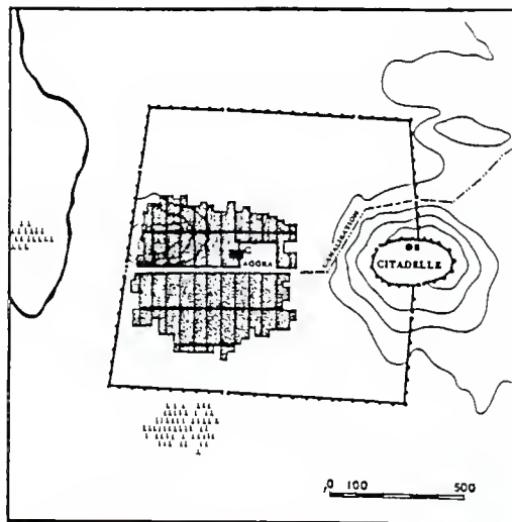


Fig. 19. Plan of Aleppo in Byzantine times
(before 636 A.D.).

Source : Sauvaget, J., "Aleppo" (tr. J. Tyrwhitt),
Ekistics, June 1961, p. 395.

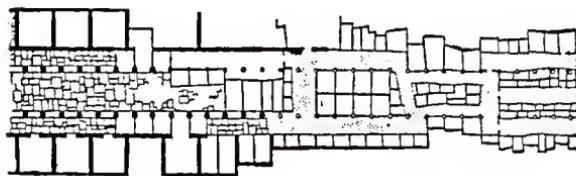
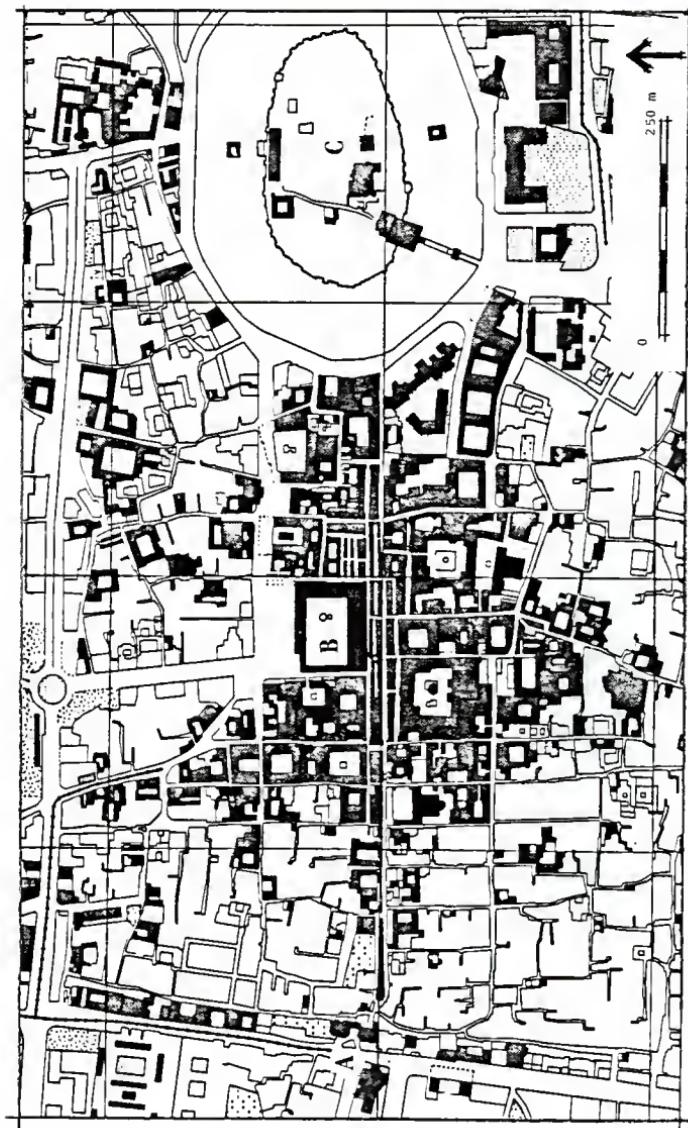


Fig. 20. A schematic illustration of the process of
transforming the colonnaded avenue of antiquity
into the souq of medieval Islam, Aleppo.

Source : Sauvaget, J., op. cit., p. 397.



A: Bab Antakia
 B: The Great Mosque
 C: The Citadel

Fig. 21. Souqs of Aleppo.
 Source : Gaube, H. and Wirth, E., Aleppo (in German), 1984,
 Karte 2.

that would rival the work of his brother al-Walid in Damascus. Since it was the only open space, the agora became the courtyard of his Grand Mosque (the Umayyad Mosque).¹⁰ The most immediate result of the construction of these two mosques was to change the position and architectural appearance of the city's souqs. The market was shifted to one of the city gates, housed in a building rather like a khan, with a central courtyard surrounded by stalls and shops attached to the surrounding wall fronted by a covered portico which ran all round the court. However, all the shops displaced from the ancient agora could not be accommodated in this new market, and had to find other locations. The decumanus ceased to be a major traffic route, since the first mosque in the triumphal archway blocked its egress. As a result, the bays between its columns came to be filled in and used for commerce.¹¹ This marked the beginning of the souq.

One market remained upon the site of the agora, the market for textiles (the qaysariyya), which, until the 12th century, remained within the precincts of the Great Mosque (the Umayyad Mosque). The new structure for the textile market was quite different from the former one. It consists of three new souqs built along the east, south and west faces of the Great Mosque (Figure 22). Two were for new cloth, the third for second-hand clothing.¹²

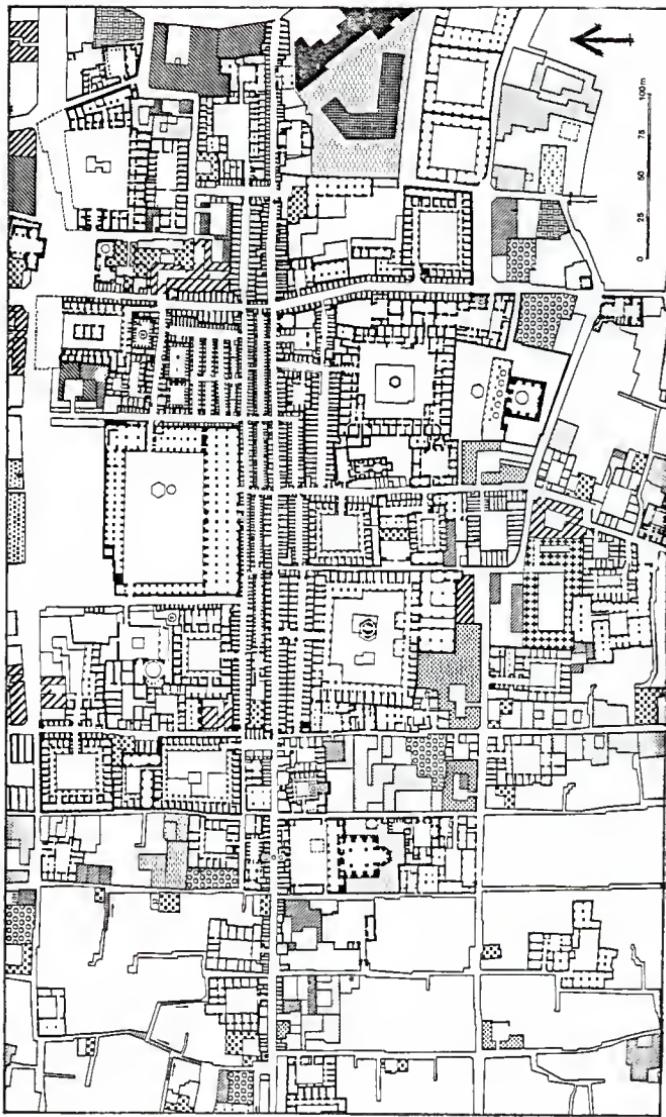


Fig. 22. Shops in the souqs of Aleppo.

Source : Gaubé, H. and Wirth, E., Aleppo, karte 1.

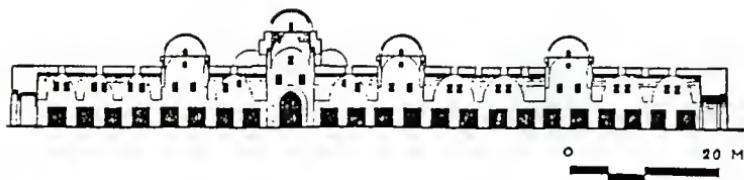


Fig. 23. An elevation of souq Khan al-Jumrok showing the shops and the windows of the gaysariyya, Aleppo.

Source: J. Sauvaget, op. cit., p. 216.

During the Mamluk period (1260-1516), some new commercial streets were created, some were reconstructed or enlarged, (Figure 24). Others, like the old silk market which became occupied by coppersellers, changed their function.

Other public buildings, such as madrasas, hammams, khans, mosques, drinking fountains and toilets, were built in the souqs area (Figure 25). By the middle of the thirteenth century Aleppo had, for instance, at least 194 public baths. The most important new edifices were the khans of the central souqs which covered large areas, signifying the amplitude of their trading. Their form is rigorously adhered to; shops and stalls are disposed around one or two courts of unequal size. These were rented by foreign merchants living on the upper floor, in rooms opening out onto a gallery. Most were highly specialized, such as the ¹³ khan which was entirely occupied by Venetian merchants.

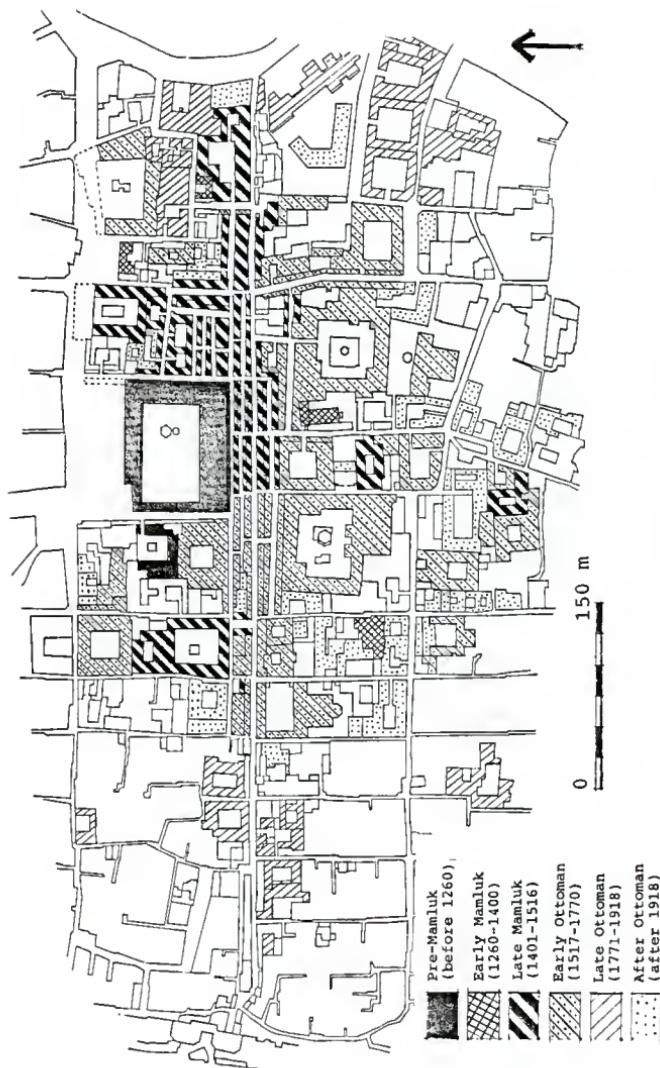


Fig. 24. Historical changes in buildings, Aleppo.
Base map: Gaube, H. and Wirth, E., Aleppo, karte 2.

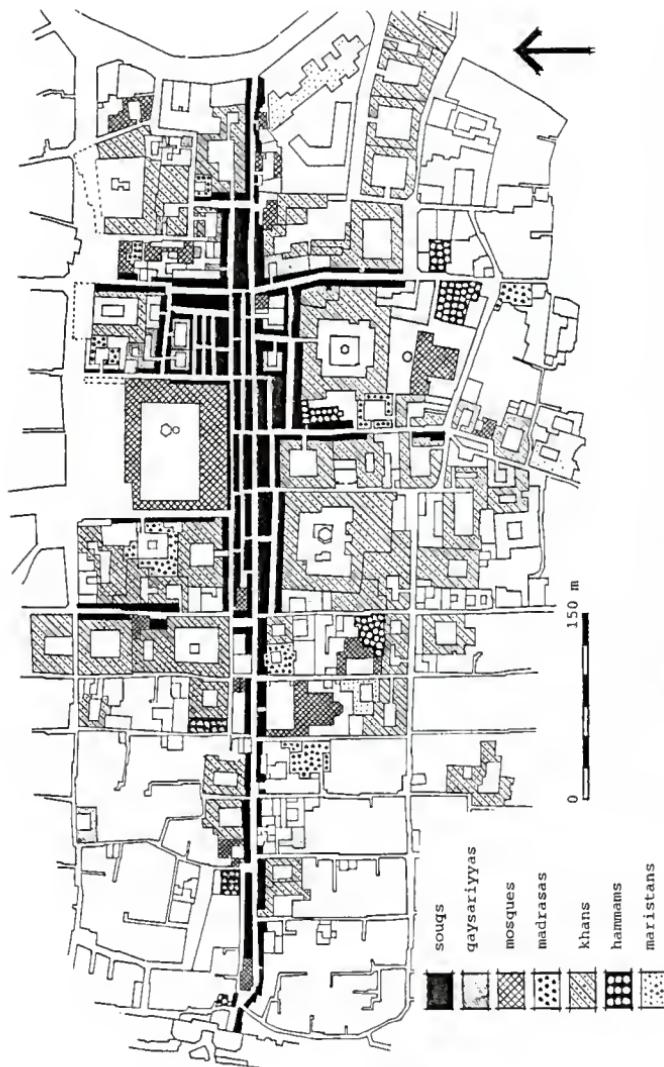


Fig. 25. Major communal institutions within the souq area,
Aleppo.
Base map: Gauße, H. and Wirth, E., Aleppo, karte 3.

The total existing area of the souqs today is about 16 acres and is about 10 kilometers long. Unlike the Bazaar of Isfahan, the souqs of Aleppo spread in the four directions with different forms. They are either parallel or perpendicular to each other and each has its own gates so that during the night it could be closed off from the rest of the city.

Originally, all souqs were waqf; later, as waqf institutions became weaker, the municipality and the private sector bought some parts, renovated the shops, and either occupied or rented them to other shopkeepers. There are no statistical records of the ownership pattern but it is expected that most of these shops are still owned by waqf.

During the Umayyad period, the muhtasib supervised the souqs and ensured that its customers were protected in terms of measurements and prices. Later, during the 11th century, he became one of the important government personnel. Nowadays the muhtasib does not exist and is replaced by the municipality and the chamber of commerce.

Today, the souqs of Aleppo still function as the most popular souqs in the region and people from nearby towns still shop in these souqs. The land-use structure of the merchandise zoning has been disrupted, see (Figure 26).

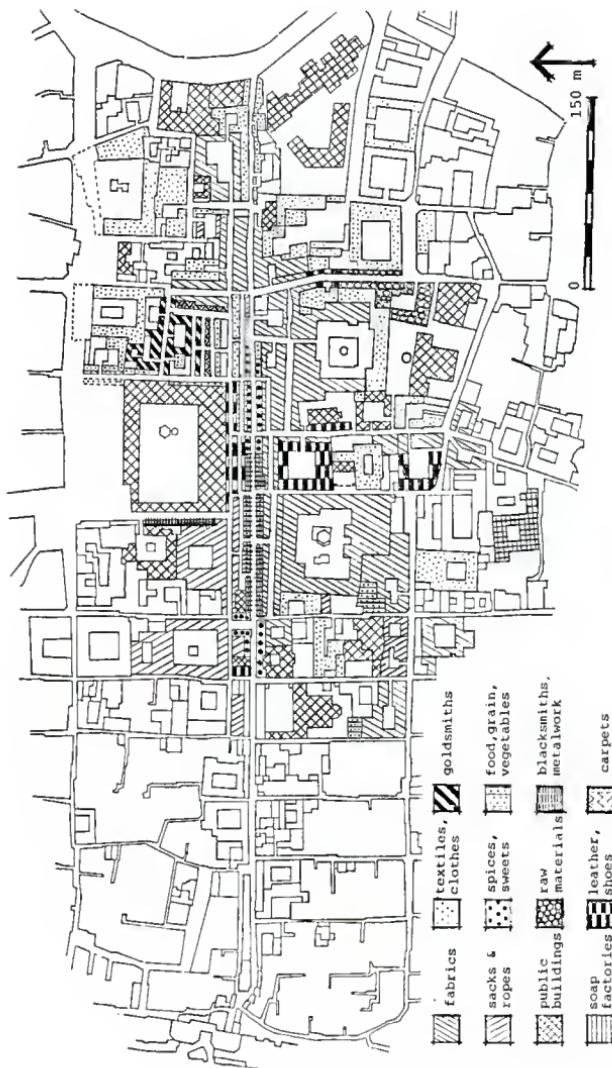


Fig. 26 Concentration of trades and crafts in the souqs of Aleppo.
Base map: Gaube, H. and Wirth, E., Aleppo, karte 4.

Although some trades and crafts, like goldsmiths, still occupy the same location, many souqs have changed their function. Part of the shopping area underwent renovation and part of the nearby institutions were destroyed to provide space for accommodating cars. One new road was established to serve no other purpose than to provide an axial approach to the Great Mosque. Khans are utilized either for small-scale factories or storage space. One hammam was renovated and is now being used by the public. Madrasas are kept unused except for a few that are being used as elementary schools.

CHAPTER 4 NOTES

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2. N. Ardalani and L. Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity, University of Chicago Press, 1973, p. 113.
3. K. Browne and Sherban Cantacuzino, op. cit., p. 265.
4. Ibid., p. 265.
5. K. Browne and Sherban Cantacuzino, op. cit., p. 265.
6. N. Ardalani and L. Bakhtiar, op. cit., p. 119.
7. Ibid., p. 117.
8. Samir Abdulac, "Conservation Problems in the Middle East and North Africa," in Adaptive Reuse: Integrating Traditional Areas into the Modern Urban Fabric, Designing in Islamic Cultures 3, The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, Harvard University and the M.I.T., Cambridge, 1983, p. 20.
9. Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, Aleppo, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1984, p. 468.
10. Samir Abdulac, "Large-Scale Development in the History of Muslim Urbanism," in Continuity and Change: Design Strategies for Large-Scale Urban Development, Designing in Islamic Cultures 4, The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, Harvard University and the M.I.T., Cambridge, 1984, p. 7.
11. J. Sauvaget, "Aleppo," (tr. Jacqueline Tyrwhitt), Ekistics, June 1961, p. 400.
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13. Ibid., p. 410.

CHAPTER 5. THE SOUQ OF NABLUS

5.a The city of Nablus

Nablus, with a current population of more than 100,000, is the largest city, after Jerusalem, in the West Bank -an area which was occupied by Israel in 1967. It is located about 67 k.m. north of Jerusalem, and 42 k.m. east of the Mediterranean, (Figure 27). The name of the city is derived from the old Latin name "Neapolis," or New City, built in A.D. 72 by the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and indeed Roman-Byzantine ruins can still be seen in Nablus. The predecessor to Neapolis was Shechem, destroyed in A.D. 67 by the Romans before building the "New City." Shechem was about 1 mile east of Neapolis. ¹ Although there is no information about the size of the Roman "Neapolis," recent archeological works indicate that it was a large city. Nablus remained a Christian city until the seventh century, when the Muslims conquered Palestine. In 1099 the crusaders took over the city and controlled the area for less than a century. After the battle of Hittin in 1187, Nablus came under Muslim rule for the second time. In 1242 it appears again to have fallen into the hands of the Christians; but ² two years later was captured by the Mamluks. Since that time and until World War I, it has remained under Muslim rule.



Fig. 27. Map shows the location of Nablus.

Source : The United Nations and the Question of Palestine, United Nations, 1985, p. 17.

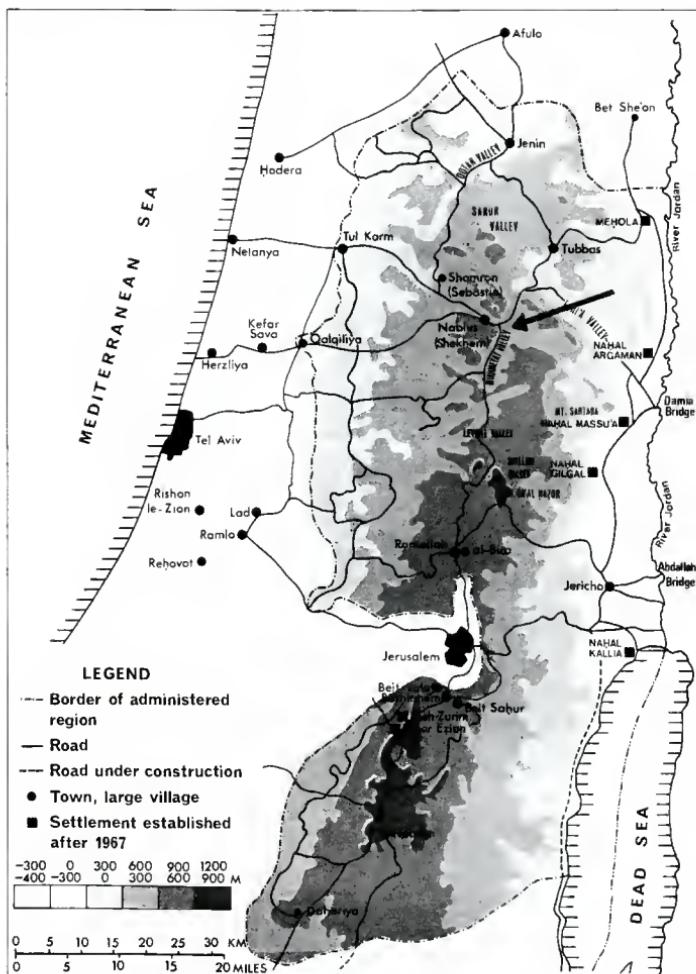


Fig. 28. West Bank - altitudes, towns, new settlements.

Source : Orni, E. and Efrat, E., Geography of Israel,
Jerusalem, 1971, p. 409.

Nablus is one of the most beautifully situated cities in Palestine. It lies in a long valley formed by two chains of mountains, on the south side Gerizim (2,900 feet high), on the north side Ebal (3,140 feet high), (Figure 29). The town with its 22 springs, most of them in Gerizim, is unusually rich in water. Only some of these springs are now working. Al-Dimashki, who visited Nablus at the end of the 13th century, described the city as "a palace in its ³ gardens." Because of its peculiar position, the city is long and narrow, extending from east to west.

The importance of Nablus was due to the rich territory which encircled it and to the important highways which connected it with Jerusalem and Hebron in the south; with central Palestine, Damascus, and Beirut in the north; with the coast plains on the west; and with the Jordan valley in the east. At Nablus all these great roads focused, making the city throughout its history an influential commercial ⁴ metropolis. The manufacture of soap has been for a long time the chief industry of Nablus and regarded as the best in the country. The surplus of olive-oil is used for this kind of soap. In 1913, for example, there were 29 soap factories, and this number is accounted for by the fact that the surrounding country abounds in olive orchards.⁵ The people of Nablus have carried on considerable trade with the surrounding regions, not only in soap, but also

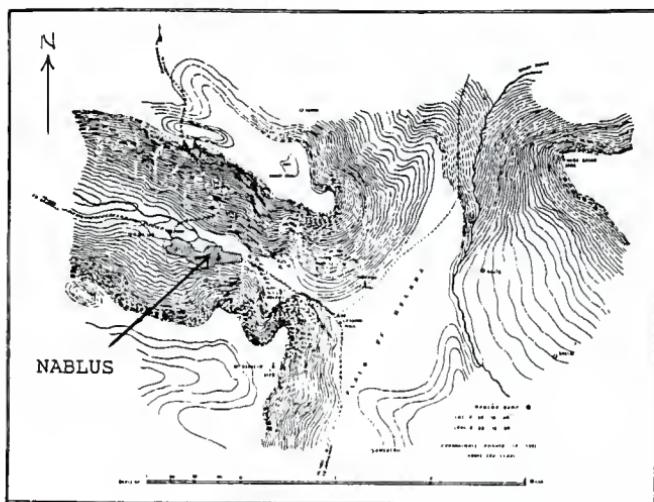


Fig. 29. The vale of Nablus - 1865.

Source : Ben-Arieh, Y., The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century, Jerusalem, 1979,
p. 197.

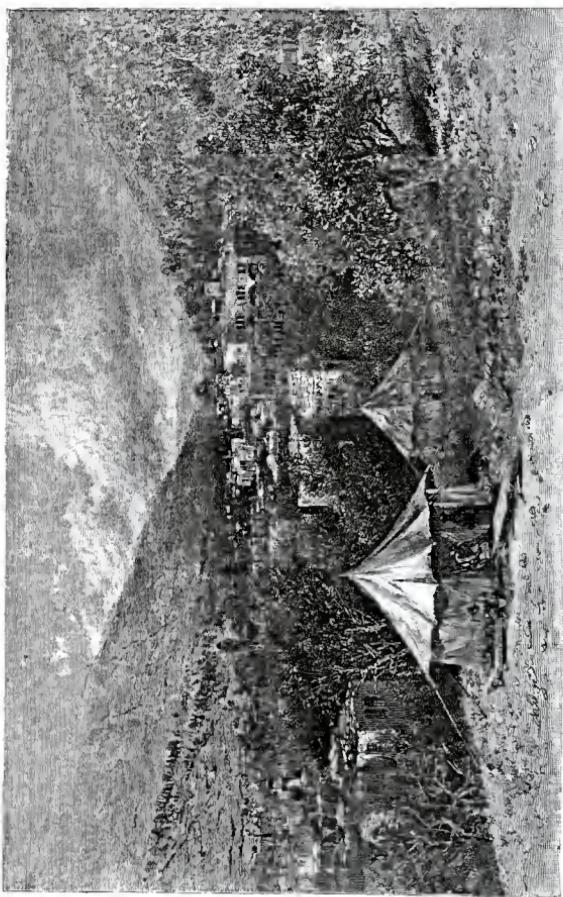


Fig. 30. Nablus in 1882, looking east - Gerizim on the right and Ebal on the left.
Source : Thomson, W.M., The Land and the Book - Central Palestine and Phenicia, 1882, Facing p. 136.

in grain, cotton, wool, and oil.

Like many other Islamic cities, the present city of Nablus consists of two parts, the traditional old city and the "modern" one, (Figure 31). Recent excavations indicate that the old city of Nablus occupied, in part at least, the same place as the ancient Roman "Neapolis."⁶ It seems that the city continued to have gates during the first period of the Islamic rule. Thereafter, the city has suffered many earthquakes and wars, and thus many of its parts were demolished. Later, when the Muslims defeated the crusaders, they surrounded the city by walls with gates which remained until the early 20th century. They also converted the Christian church which stood in the central open space of the city into a mosque which is now called Jami' an-Nassr, (the Mosque of Victory). In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, the Mamluks reconstructed the city and built many new public buildings, some of which still exist. They also built two mosques in the same areas of previous churches, one of them is believed to be the site of the Byzantine Basilica, with a fine Gothic portal which still can be seen on the eastern entrance. The only existing covered portion of the souq of Nablus, Khan at-Tujjar or Souq as-Sultan, dates from this period.⁷

The houses of the old city are solidly built of stone,

نقشه (الارتفاعات) شهری که در برگیرنده نابلس

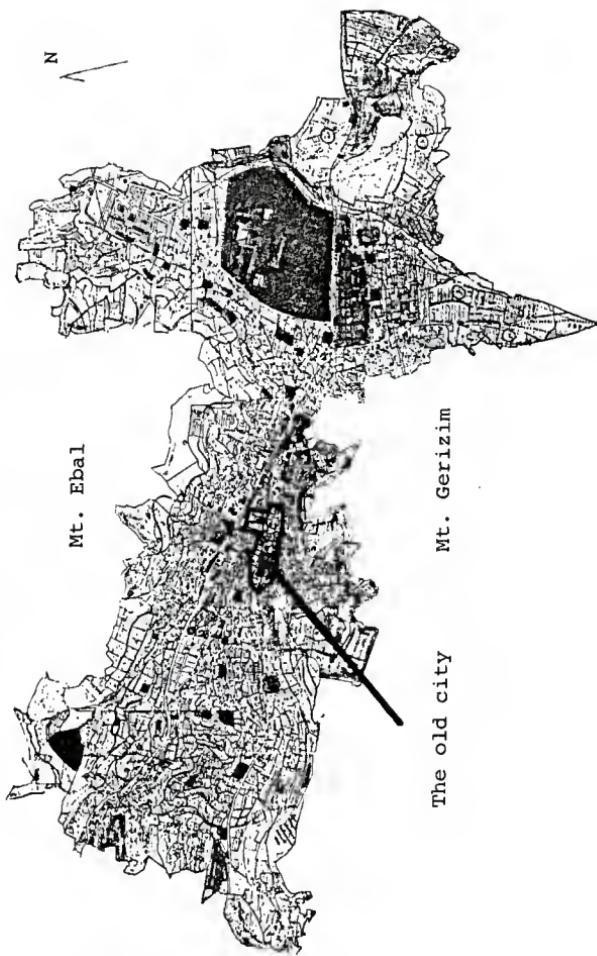


Fig. 31. The boundaries of the modern Nablus, 1987.

Source : Municipality of Nablus.

having the same sort of courts, gates, doors, windows, and roofs as those at Jerusalem. The streets are narrow, crooked, dark, sometimes paved, arched or vaulted over in many places, and so low that the pedestrians can scarcely stand upright, except in the center of them.

Among other public buildings, the old city has five hammams (public baths), of which only one or two are still functioning. Many soap factories have moved to the modern city, and only a few remained in the old one. It is reported that the city of Nablus in 1671 had at least seven ⁸ madrasas (religious schools). A bimaristan (health center) also existed in the city, although its exact location is unknown. Many shrines are still existing inside and outside the old city. Until 1927 the city continued to have gates. In addition to the souq, mosques are the only important public buildings which still function in the old city.

5.b The Evolution of The Souq of Nablus

It appears that the case of Nablus is similar to that of Aleppo, in terms of the transformation of the central souq area. Although there is no formal proof, evidence suggests that the souq of the old city of Nablus, or at least part of it, has developed from the major thoroughfare, (the decumanus), of the ancient Roman city. However, the site of the center of the Roman city is not clearly defined, and

there are two theories suggesting the location of that center. The first theory suggests that the Roman city occupied only the eastern part of the existing old city of Nablus, and thus the center of that city must have been in the area of the present Great Mosque. This theory is based on the sixth-century mosaic found at Madeba in 1897, which shows the Roman "Neapolis," (Figure 32). Prominent in the mosaic is the main thoroughfare which starts from the eastern gate and continues to the west, (the decumanus), and the perpendicular street, (the cardo), which connects the center of the city with the theatre in the south. If we compare the location of this theatre with the site of the one which was recently discovered in the old city, we might conclude that the center of the Roman city must have been around the site of the present Great Mosque which, as mentioned previously, was built on the place of the Byzantine Basilica, (Figure 33). Another point which might support this theory is that the area extending between the Great Mosque and the discovered theatre is still called "Harat al-Qaysariyya" (the gaysariyya neighborhood). This name suggests the presence of a Classical city structure which influenced the later Islamic urban design. According to this theory, the present souq seems to be an extension of the Roman thoroughfare towards the west.

However, the second hypothesis is similar to that of



Fig. 32. The oldest existing map of "Neapolis". The sixth-century mosaic found at Madaba, Jordan in 1897.

Source : Personal communications, Mr. Ibrahim al-Fanni, Nablus, 1987.

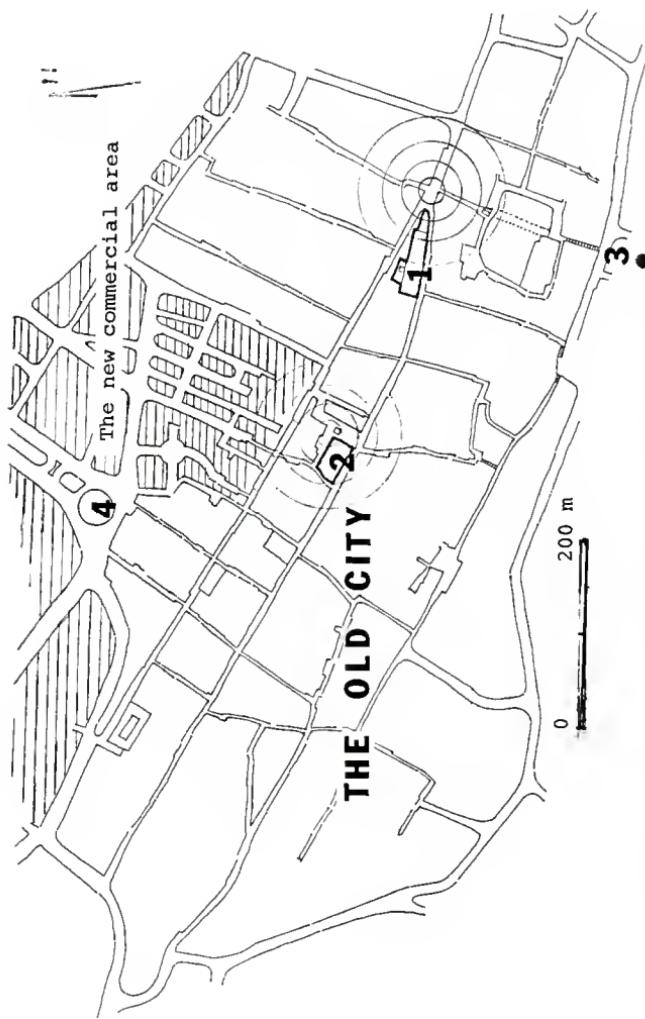


Fig. 33. The old city of Nablus. 1: The Great Mosque, 2: Jami' an-Nassr, 3: The location of the Roman theatre, 4: The main circle in the whole city.

Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

Aleppo. This hypothesis suggests that the Roman city occupied the entire site of the existing old city of Nablus and that the center of that city seems to have been the same present center which is the area of Jami' an-Nassr. This hypothesis is based on the following observations:

- The grid plan is more clearly seen in the western part of the old city.
- The area of Jami' an-Nassr, which is the main mosque, is the geometrical center of the existing old city. In front of this mosque is the only open space in the old city.
- Mugaddasi, who visited Nablus in the 10th century, writes about the city: "Its market-place extends from gate to gate, and a second market goes to the center of the town. The Great Mosque is in its midst, and is very finely paved."⁹ However, a second market that goes north-south still exists in the area of Jami' an-Nassr. According to Ihsan al-Nimr, a Palestinian historian, the present Great Mosque and Jami' an-Nassr were converted to mosques only in the 13th century. He also mentioned that Muslims, when they first came to Nablus, settled in the northern part of the city and built a jami' in the area north of the existing covered portion of the souq, which is still near the center of the old city. This jami' was destroyed by the crusaders when they occupied the city. Later, when

Muslims came again, they built two madrasas on the site of the previous jami' and two others to the south, and between these four madrasas they built the covered souq Khan at-Tujjar (the merchants' khan).¹⁰ Thus, the mosque mentioned by Mugaddasi in the 10th century must have been the same jami' destroyed in the 12th century.

In any case, wherever the center of the Roman city might have been, it is clear that the present souq follows the same line of the ancient decumanus. As more information is discovered about the ancient city, it is expected that evidence supporting these alignments will be presented.

The core of the existing old city consists of two major east-west routes. They are parallel to each other for a long distance before they meet at the eastern entrance of the Great Mosque, (Figure 34). One of these routes, which separates the residential areas from the commercial center, can be considered as the social spine of the old city, although it has few shops. While the other, which forms the boundary between the old and new commercial centers, is completely devoted to commercial activities, forming the commercial spine of the old city. These two spines are connected by a series of minor north-south routes, which, in the western part, intersect with the main routes at a constant interval of 60 meters. This dimension is within

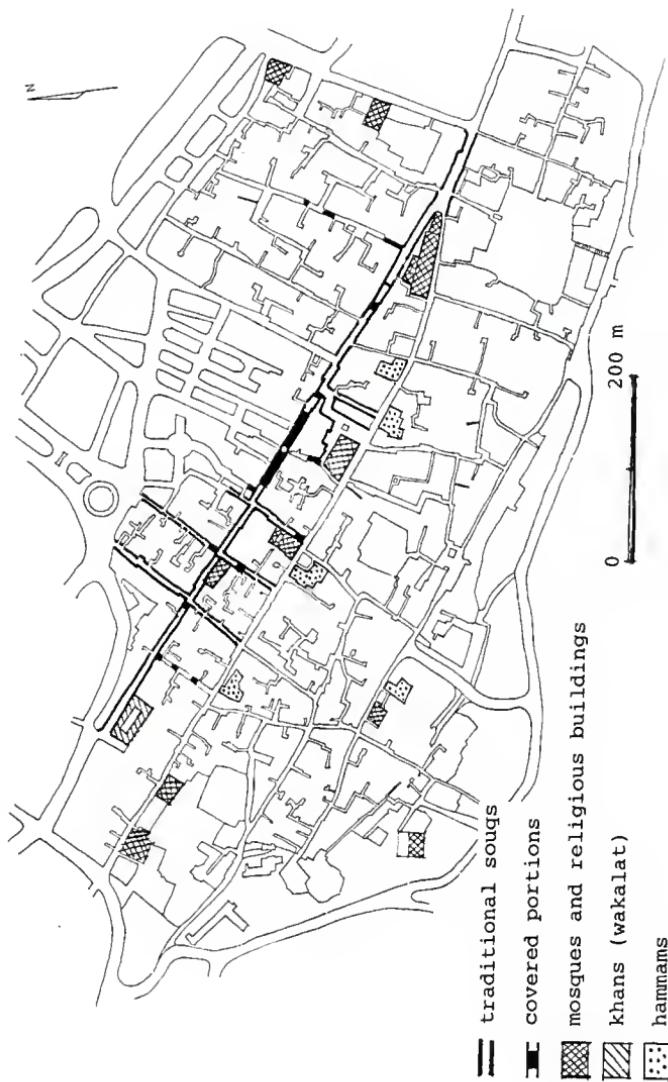


Fig. 34. Public buildings in the old city of Nablus.

Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

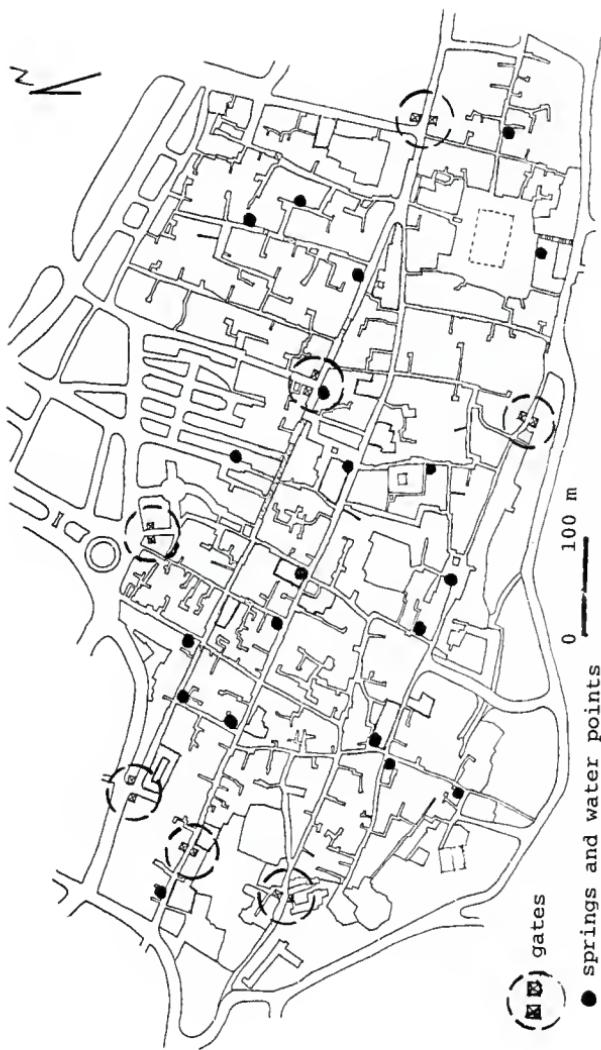


Fig. 35. Map shows the location of gates and springs in the old city of Nablus.

Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

the normal range of a typical Classical city block.

The commercial spine extends between Wakala (or khan) al-Farrokhiiyya near the west gate of the old city and the Great Mosque in the east. According to the first hypothesis, this Great Mosque used to be the center of the ancient Roman city. The spine is over 700 meters long, and varies from 3 to 5 meters in width. While there are many places, mostly at the intersections, where only a small area is vaulted or arched over, the most important covered portion is the one in the middle of the souq, Khan at-Tujjar or Souq as-Sultan, (Figures 34, 36). This portion of the souq was built by as-Sultan Qalawoon in the thirteenth century,¹¹ during the Mamluk period. It is about 80 meters long, 4 meters wide, and 2 stories high, with rows of shops in the ground level, while the upper level, which has openings onto the souq, is either used for storage or belongs to adjacent houses. This souq is lit only by rectangular openings in the roof, while in the middle, where it is intersected by a perpendicular path leading to Jami' an-Nassr, it is covered by a large colored-glass dome, (Figure 37). Along the main route of the souq, this section is also the only one which is paved by stone. In fact, it is the focal point of the souq, if not the entire city. Describing this part of the souq, a western traveller who visited Nablus in the 19th century writes:

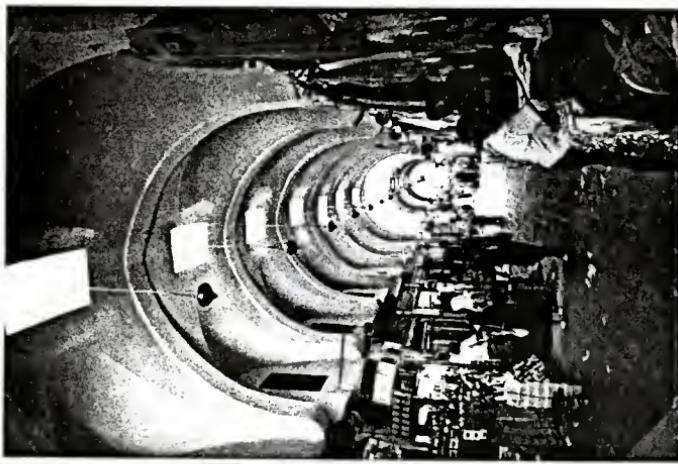


Fig. 36. Khan at-Tujjar, Nablus.
(photo by the author)

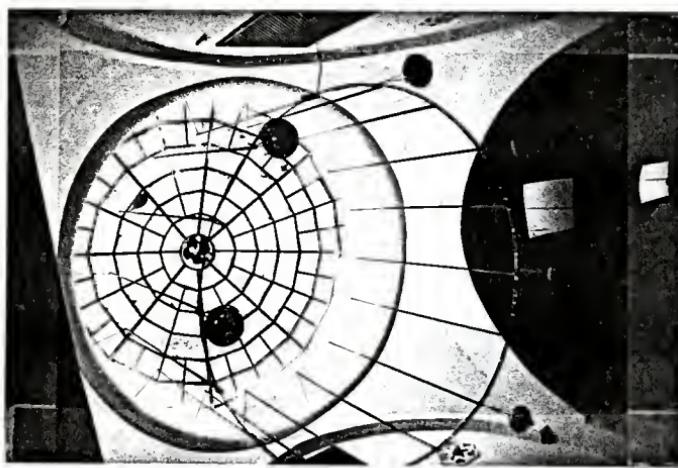


Fig. 37. Glass dome at the middle of the souq, Nablus. (photo by the author)

"...., we made our way down a street almost blocked up by camels, and thence passed into the principal bazaar, the finest arcade in Palestine. Here European goods are displayed, such as Manchester prints, Sheffield cutlery, beads, and French bijouterie, very small mirrors, Bohemian glass bottles for nargilehs, Swiss head-kerchiefs, in imitation of the Constantinople mundils, crockery-ware, and China coffee-cups. But the brightest shops are those in which Damascus and Aleppo silks, and embroidered jackets and tarbushes from Stamboul, appear, with stores of Turkish pipes, amber rosaries, and bracelets from Hebron."¹²

Although it is not known which part of the souq was built first, it is clear that the covered portion is the only planned part of the whole souq as it stands today. The size of shops in this part are all the same and the floor is lower than the area south of the souq. At the middle of the southern wall of this souq, under the glass dome, several steps lead to a short path which connects the souq with the central open space in which a clock tower and Jami' an-Nassr stand. This jami' is considered the principal one because of its location, while Jami' al-Kabir (the Great Mosque) in the east seems to bear this name only because of its size. Another part of the souq area that might have been planned is the souq which goes north-south near Jami' an-Nassr, forming the eastern edge of the central open space. This souq is still paved by old stones, and seems to have been covered or colonaded, (Figure 38).

However, vaulting is not the only coverage system used in



(photo by the author)

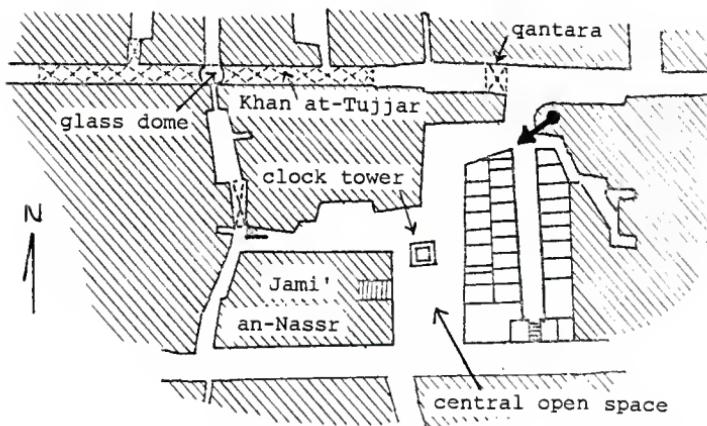


Fig. 38. The center of the old city, Nablus.

Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

the souq of Nablus. Most shops use metal or aluminum canopies to give shade in the summer and protect the shops from rain during winter. Two rows of canopies, one on each side of the souq, form the "roof" of the passage thus creating many shaded areas along the souq with a long narrow opening in the middle. In some areas, specifically in the souq of vegetables, a kind of fabric is temporarily used in the summer times to cover some parts of the souq clearly to protect both the pedestrians and the vegetables from the hot sun.

5.c The Features of The Souq of Nablus

While Khan at-Tujjar was specialized in luxurious and precious materials, clearly because it is the closest part of the souq to the main mosque (Jami' an-Nassr), many other parts of the souq were also specialized in different goods. There were souqs for lemons and oranges, prepared food and vegetables, dried fruits, olives, oil, rice, onion, butter, and cheese. There were also small areas especially devoted to the sale of tobacco.¹³ These different souqs were located between the intersection points, and in the minor north-south aisles.

At the cross junctions, the minor aisles do not continue exactly on the same line, but rather deviate to the right or left, (Figures 39, 40). The reason behind this is

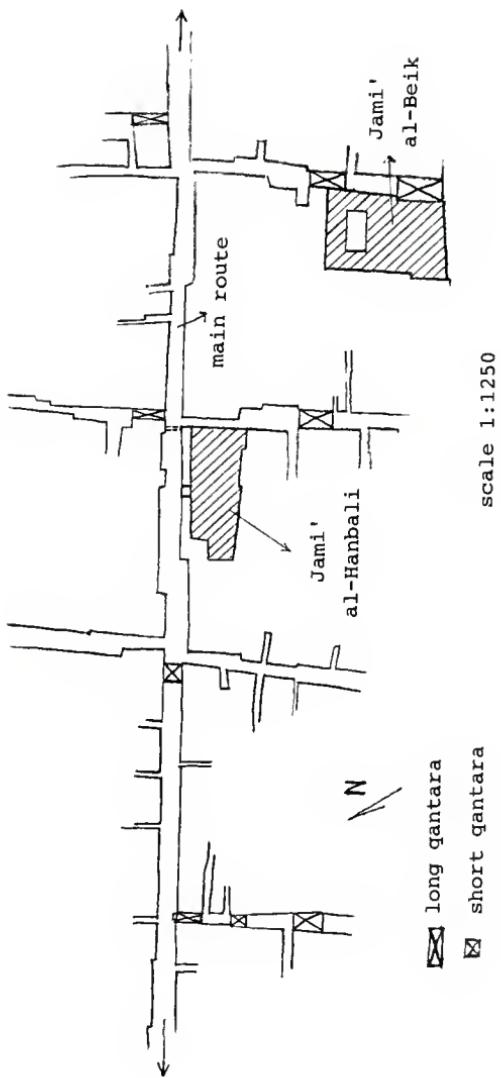


Fig. 39. The qanater near the intersection points in the western part of the souq, Nablus.

Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

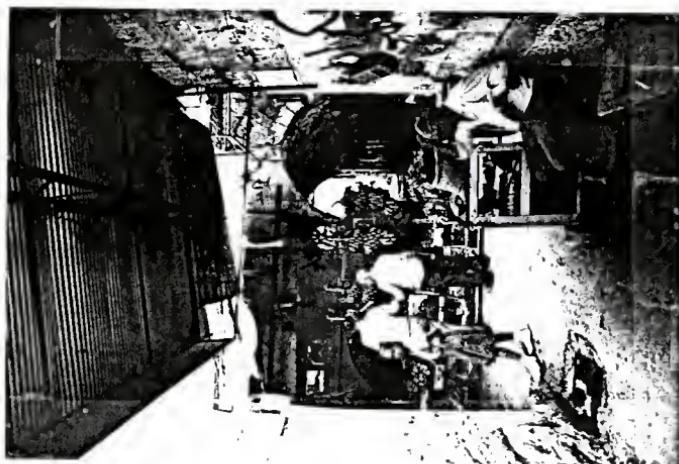
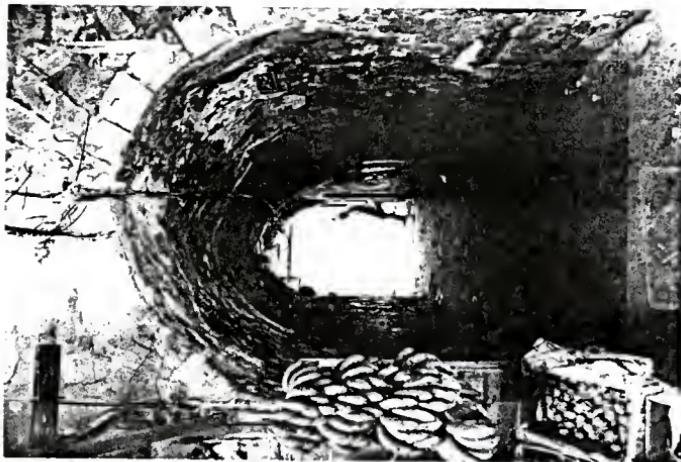
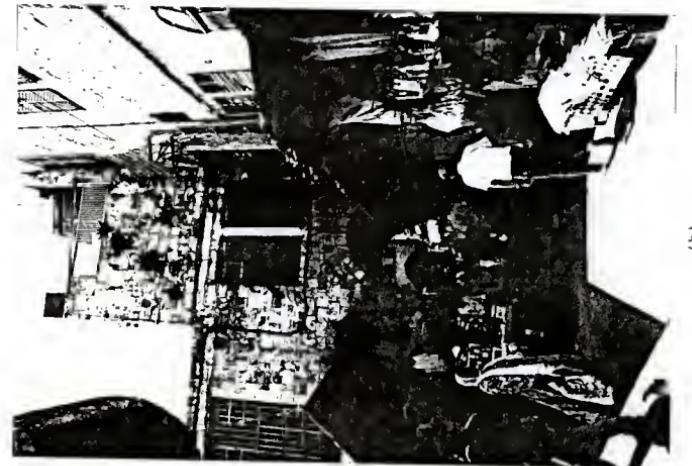


Fig. 40. The secondary routes do not proceed exactly on the same line, Nablus.
(photos by the author)

obviously to decrease the conflict of traffic and to emphasize the continuity of the major spine. Jogging of secondary streets was sometimes done in the Classical cities to block winds from sweeping the entire city. The same principle, in different forms, was also applied in many Islamic cities.

Another characteristic feature of the souq of Nablus is the use of the qantara. It is a room, or a series of rooms, that covers part of the street. The qantara can be either a short or a long narrow one, (Figure 41). It is noted that the short qantara, in the souq area, can only be seen in the main route, specifically before or after intersection points, while the long narrow ones are located in the minor aisles, mostly where they meet with the major spine of the souq, see Figure 39. It seems that the reason behind these qanater (plural of qantara) is a structural one, since the weakest parts of the souq structure are the intersection points. It also seems that the factor behind the length of these qanater was the width of the streets. In fact, and whether it was on purpose or not, the short qantara functions as a landmark that indicates intersection points, while the long narrow one works as an entrance to the main souq, where the light can be seen from a distance at the end of the tunnel, (Figure 41a). However, there are other forms of "landmarks" which can also be seen in the areas of



(b)



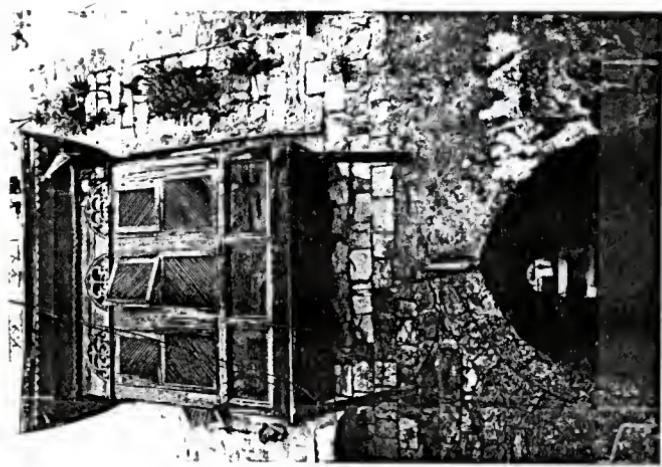
(a)

Fig. 41. Types of qanater in the Souq of Nablus. (a) long,
(b) short. (photos by the author)

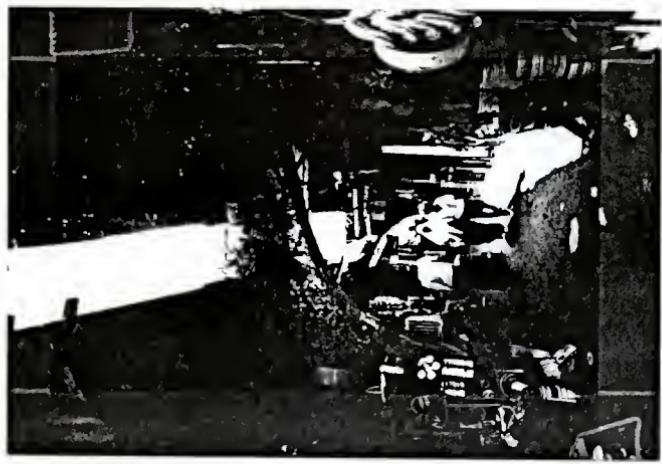
intersection, such as a buttressing arch, and mashrabiyya indicating a passage underneath, (Figure 42).

Other elements which also work as landmarks, besides their primary function, are the minarets of mosques. The minarets of the Great Mosque in the east and Al-Hanbali one in the west can be seen from many points in the main spine of the souq, marking both ends of the spine, (Figure 43). These minarets are built right over the northern entrances of these mosques, and since the northern facades of these mosques are hidden behind shops, minarets indicate the entrances to these mosques from the main route of the souq.

Although there is no evidence that the souq of Nablus has had gates which can be closed during the night, the souq still has other features which are common to many Islamic souqs. It is reported that the merchants and craftsmen were organized in different guilds, each guild had its own representative, and on top of all representatives was the ¹⁴ person of Shaykh at-Tujjar (the merchants' shaykh). It also seems that there used to be a muhtasib for the souq of Nablus, whose main role was to supervise the commercial ¹⁵ activities and collect taxes. Another element which also can be seen in the souq of Nablus is the sabil, a drinking water basin. There are at least two sabils still functioning in the souq area. One is located in front of the Great

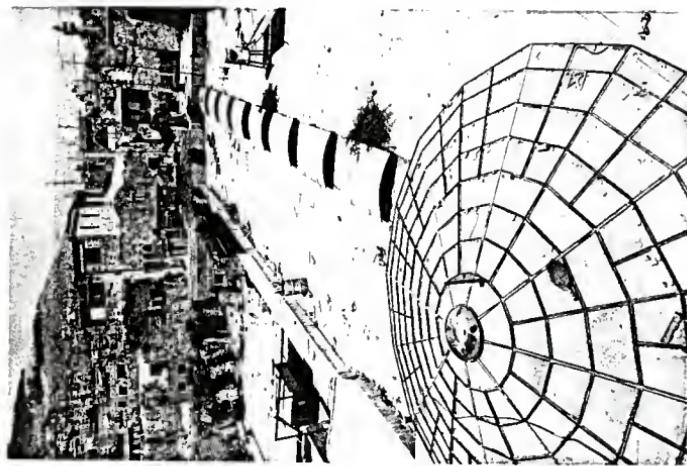


(a)

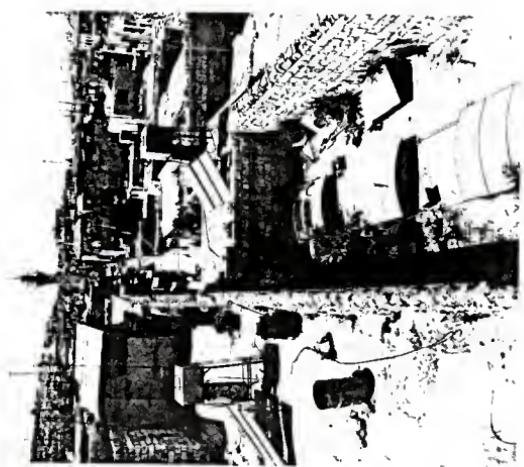


(b)

Fig. 42. Other kinds of landmarks. (a) flying buttress, (b) mashrabiyya.
(photos by the author)



(b)



(a)

Fig. 43. The Souq of Nablus defined by the minarets of Jami' al-Hanbali in the west (a), and Jami' al-Kabir in the east (b). (photos by the author)

Mosque, while the other, which was recently rebuilt, is in the area of Jami' al-Hanbali.

Mosques are the only communal institutions that still function in the souq. They became part of the daily life; commercial activities are arranged according to the times of prayers. Life starts with the call for Salat al-Fajr (the dawn prayer). Shortly after the prayer, many shopkeepers start to arrive, and by sunrise, most shops are opened. At the time of noon and afternoon prayers, shopkeepers who perform their prayers in the mosque leave their shops open. They either place small chairs in the entrances of their shops, or ask other shopkeepers, who stay in the souq, to take care of their shops. A great deal of trust and mutual confidence exists between shopkeepers. Probably the most important reason behind this mutual confidence is the religious factor. This confidence does not only exist among shopkeepers, but also between the sellers and their customers. The friendly relationship allows, for instance, the customer to keep what he buys in the shop until he completes his shopping.

Among other supporting facilities in the souq area are khans or wakalat. There were at least two khans in the souq of Nablus, Wakala al-Farrokhyya and Wakala Khan at-Tujjar. The first one is located at the western end of the main

route of the souq (Figures 34, 44). Most parts of this khan are demolished, while others are occupied by blacksmiths who use the courtyard as a workshop. This khan consisted basically of three stories surrounding an open courtyard. The upper floors consisted of rooms for merchants, while stables were located on the ground level. It is reported that a small mosque and fountain were built in the open courtyard of this khan.¹⁶ The other khan, used to be in the area of Khan at-Tujjar (the covered portion of the souq), is mentioned by a traveller who visited the city in the 19th century.¹⁷ This might explain why the covered portion is still called Khan at-Tujjar. No information exists about this khan except that it was well planned and consisted of two stories of rooms surrounding an open courtyard.

Hammams, or public baths, are not located in the souq area. Instead, they are located along the other east-west route, which separates the residential areas from the commercial part in the old city. While many mosques are located on the northern side of this route, hammams are located along the southern one. As mentioned before, it is part of the Islamic traditions that every adult should bathe, specifically, before the Friday prayer. Therefore, hammams are located between the residential areas and the major mosques. Today, there are only one or two hammams still functioning, while others are abandoned.

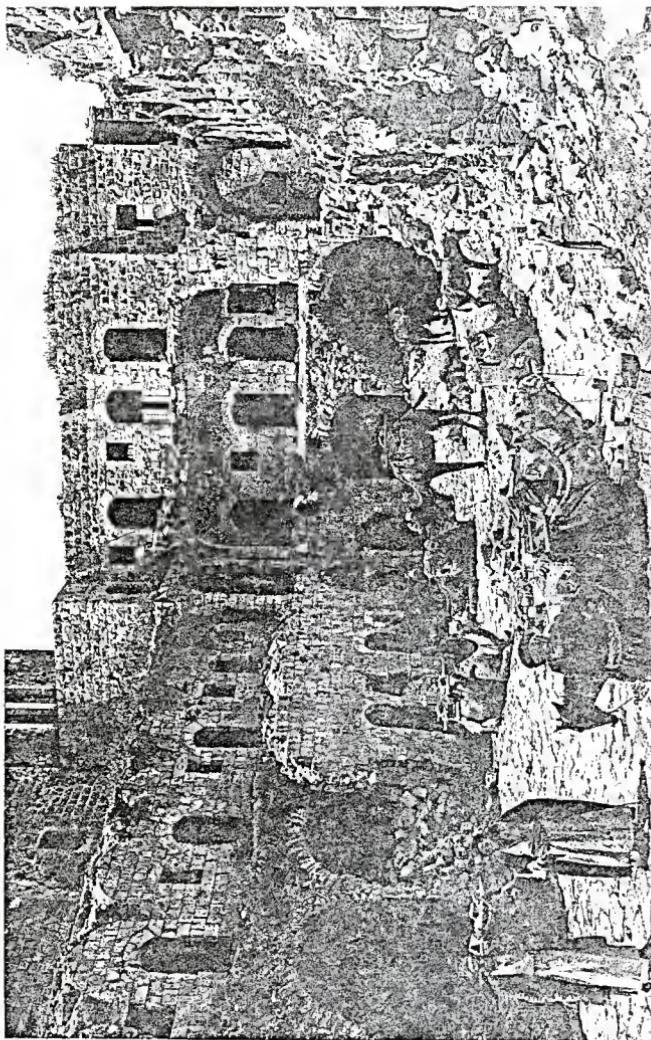


Fig. 44. Wakala al-Farroukhyya, Nablus 1925.

Source : Hoffmann, V.J., Palastina und Das Ostjordanland, 1925, p. 164.

The ownership pattern in the souq is hard to determine because of the complexity of the many parties involved in the ownership of different shops within the souq. Although there are no statistical records of the ownership pattern, most of these shops are still owned by the waqf.

Today, the souq of Nablus still functions, but there has been no attempt to renovate or rehabilitate the whole souq. Recently, the Municipality of Nablus tried to improve the appearance of some parts of the souq. The covered portion (Khan at-Tujjar), was re-plastered inside and the paving stones were replaced by new ones. Most shops still function but their land use specializations are violated in many parts of the souq. Although some specialized areas, such as the souqs of vegetables and fruits, clothes, and furniture, can still be seen in the souq, (Figure 45), they do not follow any order in terms of their relative location to the main mosque. The distribution of the different types of shops in the souq, according to the goods sold, is shown in (Figure 46). Interestingly, one minor souq is still called Souq al-Bassal (the souq of onion), although onion is not the major item sold there. Guilds do exist in Nablus, but their role is totally different from that original one. The muhtasib does not exist and has been replaced by the municipality and the Chamber of Commerce. Many shops are empty or have few items, others are kept locked. Some parts



Fig. 45. Functional grouping of merchandise in the souq, Nablus.
Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

Trade	Size (%)
clothes	30%
shoes	2
vegetables & fruits	15
groceries	5
butchers	5
household items	7
furniture	4
spices, cheese, olives	8
grains	4
coffee-shops	2
blacksmiths	2
hardware	2
sweets	3
bread & bakeries	2
miscellaneous	9

Fig. 46. Distribution of trades in the Souq of Nablus.

Source : Author's observation.

of the souq are partially demolished and about to fall down, creating an unsafe zone for pedestrians. Small portions, especially in the eastern part of the souq, were destroyed to provide enough space for cars. In general, although the souq is witnessing a gradual decline, it still has its importance as a place for shopping and recreation for the inhabitants of Nablus and the nearby towns. It is still the most liveable place in the city during daytimes.

5.d The Souq as " Place Ballet "

"In a supportive physical environment, many body ballets and time-space routines can emerge to create place ballet, which is an interaction of many time-space routines and body ballets rooted in space. The groundstone of place ballet is a regularity of human behaviors in time and space."¹⁸

Two underlying patterns appear in the place ballet of the souq of Nablus -regularity and unexpectedness. One aspect of regularity in the souq is body ballets, which involve cleaning, arranging and displaying goods, and setting up booths by sellers who do not have shops. These regular bodily routines proceed quickly and easily because the procedure is established and habitual. Particularly important is the way in which goods are displayed, which is done carefully without leaving any waste space. Most items in the souq are placed in the same location day after day, establishing a spatial continuity for sellers, who can

arrange their goods quickly and efficiently, and for buyers, who are used to a particular arrangement of goods and thus can find them conveniently, using a minimum of ¹⁹ attention and effort. After the shops open, the main bodily routine involves selling, cutting vegetables and meat, and measuring cloth.

Body ballets are usually part of time-space routines, and the souq of Nablus reflects this pattern. Cleaning, arranging, and selling are part of individual sellers' time-space routines that vary little from one day to another. Sellers and suppliers from the countryside are the first to arrive, while other shopkeepers start to arrange their goods for display and expose them in front of their shops. Before sunrise, people working outside the city start to appear. For them the souq is just a passage to be walked through.

Buyers are also involved in time-space routines. Shortly after sunrise, the earliest customers arrive, seeking out the best products for their daily needs before they go to their work. A little later, shoppers from the nearby towns and villages start to arrive. Women also start to appear in the souq, and gradually it becomes more alive. By noon the souq is full, and it stays full until late afternoon, shortly before the call for the fourth prayer. By the time

of the Maghrib prayer (the sunset prayer), all shops are closed and most shopkeepers leave for the mosques, marking the end of another day in the souq.

Pedestrians in the souq can be divided, according to their purpose, into three groups; shoppers, passers-by, and those who come only for watching. In order to find out the percentage of each group, pedestrians, mostly men, were asked at different hours during the day about their purpose of being there. Since the souq is very long, the people who were asked are only those who pass through the covered portion, which is located in the middle of the souq. The procedure was repeated everyday for one week. The results (Figure 47) vary within the same day, but remain the same for everyday. However, the percentage of each group might vary from one season to another. The same people were also asked if they come to the souq regularly. More than 60% answered that they come to the souq everyday whether they need to buy something or not, 30% come at least once a week, and less than 10% come on no regular basis. When they were asked about the best time for them to shop at the souq, around 80% said that they prefer to come either in the morning or in the early afternoon. Some people prefer to shop early in the morning to get fresh vegetables and fruits, while others, like school teachers, shop in the early afternoon when they return to their homes.

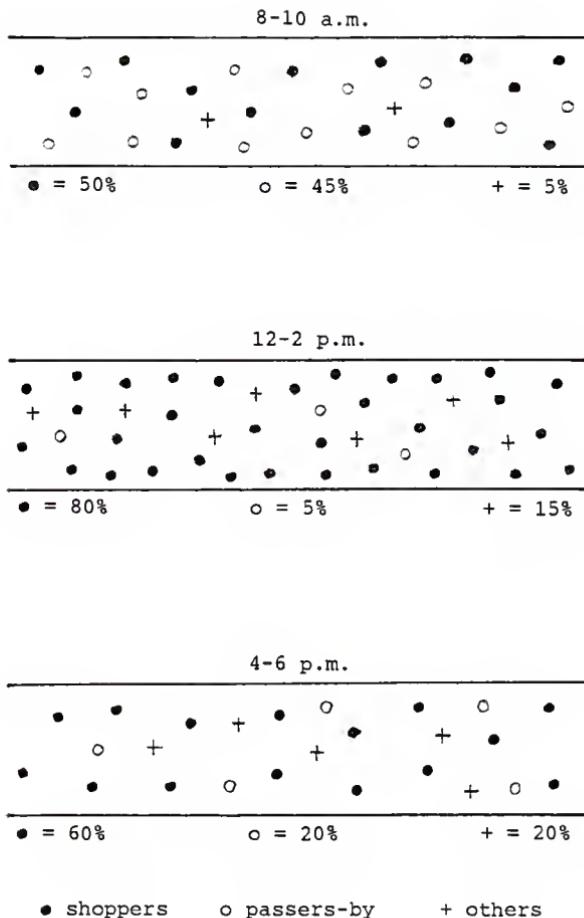


Fig. 47. A diagram showing the size of each group of pedestrians in the souq, Nablus.

Source : Author's observation.

The typical life in the souq of Nablus follows a predictable sequence. Individual behaviors repeat the same pattern, day after day, to establish a consistent time-space dynamism. Out of this regularity, variety and surprise can arise. In other words, regularity of place
20 fosters the possibility of unexpectedness.

Unexpectedness might occur in various ways. One form is the coincidental and unplanned meetings, where friends might meet at the same stall or pass each other in the souq. Unexpectedness also arises because not all shoppers are regulars. Visitors and less frequent users provide an additional population for watching and interacting. New sellers with new items may also appear, especially from one season to another. Another form of unexpectedness is provided by the sellers who talk, sing, and make jokes as they demonstrate their products. Therefore, most shoppers prefer to walk through the whole souq rather than just buy their needs and leave. The reason, as mentioned by many shoppers, is the unexpectedness motivation.

Finally, the souq is an important event for the people in Nablus and its vicinity. It is not only a set of economic exchanges, but a daily event that adds interest, enjoyment, and human interaction to people's lives. In this sense, it is a key element in the town's sense of community and place.

5.e Challenges to The Souq of Nablus

Probably today's challenge to the souq of Nablus started as early as the British mandate in Palestine, after World War I, when part of the old city was removed to provide enough space for the new commercial center. This new center consists basically of many wide streets, in many parts perpendicular to each others, with rows of modern shops in the first level, while offices are located in the upper floors. Gradually, this commercial center expanded towards the north-west, with new high rise buildings, and became the center of the larger modern city of Nablus, which has expanded longitudinally towards east and west. Since most of the residential areas are South of the traditional souq, North is the logical direction for commercial growth. Nevertheless, the greatest concentration of shops is still around the traditional souq. The rapid growth of the city has often been at the expense of the garden districts that used to surround the traditional city which became an island of continuous low-rise buildings in the heart of the whole city, (Figure 48).

Unlike other traditional Islamic cities, Nablus has not suffered severe physical damage. New roads have not been cut through the tight-packed fabric of the traditional old city, but rather it was encircled by wide roads to connect



Fig. 48. The old city of Nablus: An island of low-rise buildings.
A view looking north. (photo by Garo, 1986)

the eastern part of the modern city with the western one. Many factors have prevented new roads from cutting through the old city:

- Probably the most important factor is the loyalty of the people of Nablus to their inherited heritage. They do not allow such projects to be carried out in the old city. Many people mentioned this during interviews.
- Although most of the people living in the old city do not own cars, the other major route, (the social one), is wide enough for small size cars to pass through. While this route serves the inner parts of the city, the new surrounding roads serve the peripheries.
- The new commercial center, which is very close to the traditional souq, provides enough space for people coming from outside to park their cars alongside the streets, then continue walking through the whole area including the souq.
- More than 70% of the shopkeepers in the traditional souq still live in the old city. Thus, they do not need cars to reach their shops.

As such, most parts of the old city of Nablus still stand having avoided wholesale destruction, which has occurred at Aleppo and Isfahan.

However, the emergence of the new commercial center has had an overall negative effect on the souq. Although much of the traditional urban fabric has survived, dramatic changes in economic and social organization have occurred within the traditional center. A swing of emphasis away from the old city to the modern one is probably the most striking development. The economic, professional and cultural focus of urban life has moved to the modern city. The old center has become peripheral to modern administrative functions and economic activities. As is usually the case, most of the middle and high income families move to the modern areas, leaving the traditional city to the low income families.

Production patterns have also changed. Many of the small workshops located in and around the souq have disappeared and declined through competition from both imported and local mass-produced factory goods. Modern factories have been established outside the old city where inexpensive land is available for building.

As a result, many business people have moved out to the new commercial center, searching for larger shops with modern facilities and better access for marketing. Many of the shopowners who remained in the souq, as they try to "modernize" their shops, have introduced new building

materials which, in most cases, interrupt the harmony in the souq. Materials such as concrete and cement blocks have been introduced into the souq area. Many people complain because of the demolished parts that create unsafe zones, especially during winter times. The lack of maintenance, inadequate systems of sanitation and water supply, and the neglect of important buildings, are some of the problems that the souq of Nablus suffers.

The political situation has also affected the souq of Nablus. Israeli soldiers have blocked some of the major entrances to the souq by "walls" of barrels filled with concrete, trying to control the old city by reducing the number of its entrances. Nonetheless, one of these "walls of barrels," which is at the middle of the northern side of Khan at-Tujjar, is used by merchants for displaying their goods, (Figure 49).

Nevertheless, the souq area remains the most powerful low-income commercial center of the city serving an increasingly dense and poor residential population as well as traditional provincial customers. This means that luxury and expensive goods can not be found among those sold in the souq. However, the souq still represents the unity of secular and religious life in the city, since mosques are the only supporting institutions that still function in the

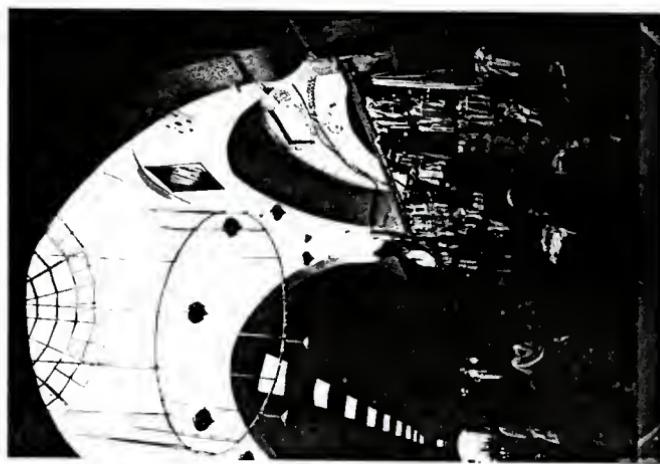
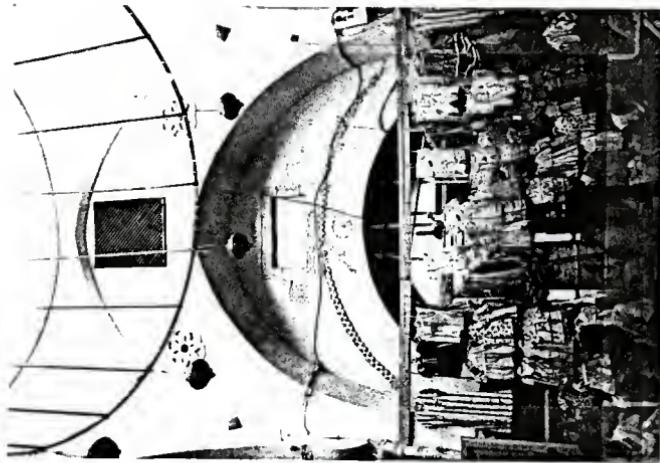


Fig. 49. Blocked entrance used for display, Nablus.

(photos by the author)

souq area. Probably, the disadvantage of not having a Friday mosque in the new commercial center is, more or less, an advantage in the favour of the traditional souq.

Finally, if the souq of Nablus has a role in fostering and maintaining community, generating human contacts and interactions that might not otherwise occur, then efforts should be made to preserve and protect it.

General features of Islamic souqs	Souq of Nablus
- location (central, near the Friday Mosque, part of the city fabric)	■
- mosques, sabilis	■
- khans or wakalat, hammams (public baths)	■
- madrasas (religious schools)	■
- qaysariyya	■
- covered or vaulted portions	■
- wooden shop-gates	■
- gates for the souq	■
- specialized souqs or lanes	■
- arrangement of goods in the souq	■
- the muhtasib	■
- shaykh at-Tujjar	■
- guilds	■
- method of display, solidarity between shopkeepers	■

Fig. 50. Features of Islamic souqs in Nablus. ■: still exist; ▨: changed/neglected or partly demolished; ▨: used to exist; ▨: might have existed; ▨: did not exist.

Source : Author's observation.

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

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4. C. F. Kent, Biblical Geography and History, New York, 1911, p. 167.
5. Mustafa M. Al-Dabbagh, Biladona Falastin (in Arabic), Vol. II, Beirut, 1970, p. 188.
6. Mr. Ibrahim Al-Fanni, a former official in the Department of Antiquities at Nablus, supplied me with information about the sites of Roman antiquities.
7. Ihsan Al-Nimr, Tariekh Jabal Nablus wal-Balqa' (in Arabic), Vol. 2, Nablus, 1961, p. 47.
8. Mustafa M. Al-Dabbagh, op. cit., p. 192.
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11. Ibid., p. 47.
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14. Ihsan Al-Nimr, op. cit., p. 295.
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17. W. M. Thomson, op. cit., p. 144.
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19. Ibid., p. 36.
20. Ibid., p. 39.

CHAPTER 6. SAVING THE SOUQ OF NABLUS

"It is ironic that lack of money is so often such a good preserver of historic buildings and abundance of wealth so often a guarantor of their destruction, not only through demolition but, as often as not, simply through tasteless remodeling or a transformation of their setting."¹

Although this chapter deals specifically with the souq of Nablus, many concepts can be applied to other souqs in many Islamic cities. The suggestions to preserve the souq of Nablus are useful not only to the municipality of Nablus, but also for other cities which have a similar feature and the will to save it.

The author strongly believes that not only the individual monuments, but the entire fabric of the traditional city of Nablus should be preserved. The old city is relatively small in size and population but possesses an importance much greater than its size. Unplanned and unthinking demolition of any part of the old city means eliminating the remains of an important period of our history.

Before dealing with the issue of developing a strategy of conservation, it is necessary to explain the reasons behind saving souqs in general. It is also of importance to define the factors which contributed to the livability of the Souq of Nablus in particular.

6.a Reasons Behind Saving the Souqs

"Maintaining a sense of historical continuity is essential, especially at a time when the Islamic countries are striving for cultural identity and survival in the face of standardized values, mass-produced culture and alien influences."² Old cities represent the accumulated work of past generations. Therefore, the principal reason for safeguarding the visual image of the past is not only the intrinsic beauty and harmony of what is to be preserved, but above all the identity and personality which these old areas relay.

Souqs have played a great role in bringing vitality and livability to the central district of the Islamic cities for centuries. As mentioned before, they were not only places for commercial transactions, but also formed a communal and recreational district for all of the inhabitants of the city. Thus, in dealing with souqs, it is necessary to think of them as being deeply rooted in culture, history, and recent lives of citizens, rather than merely as a place for commercial activities.

Traditional souqs provide the environment for the most active population. They shelter many small workshops and trades that newer commercial areas will not accommodate, adding to an economic rationale for preservation.

By demolishing the souqs, the city's life and spirit are destroyed, because the contemporary city does not accomodate the social needs as does the traditional fabric. This demolition is not only inhumane, but also uneconomical in the long run. Therefore, ways must be found to keep souqs alive and vital in order to prevent the depopulation and deterioration of the traditional city.

6.b Factors Behind the Survival of the Souq of Nablus

Despite the general state of decline and the continuous threat to the future of the Souq of Nablus, many factors play an important role in keeping this souq alive. These factors should be taken into consideration in any policy to preserve the souq. These factors are:

- The modern commercial center is very close to the traditional souq. This means that the souq remains in the vicinity of the larger center of the whole city. This closeness is due to the fact that the souq is located along the natural central spine of the valley.
- The four mosques in the souq area are still functioning, forming the religious center of the city.
- Most parts of the souq are free traffic zones for the pedestrians.

- The covered portions of the souq protect the pedestrians during the summer and winter. This encouraged many people to shop at the souq.
- Rents in the souq are low, and thus the prices are cheaper than in the modern center. Therefore the souq has become an important place for low-income families.
- Finally, some items sold in the souq, like spices and traditional clothes, can not be found in the new center.

6.c Towards a Rehabilitation Program

Before generating plans for dealing with old areas, some questions have to be answered. It is important to ask, what are we trying to preserve? Why do we want to preserve? And who are we preserving for? Clearly each answer is going to generate a completely different set of solutions.

To answer some of these questions, the author sees that any program to renovate and rehabilitate the Souq of Nablus must be part of a comprehensive policy for preserving and rehabilitating the surrounding traditional environment.

One of the major threats, not only to the souq but also to the entire old city, is that the local inhabitants move to the modern areas. Since the tourism movement in the city is almost absent and not expected to develop in the future,

due to the unsettled political issue, policies must be directed towards the local inhabitants and users to ensure a continuous source of income to the souq. Therefore, contrary to some cases in other Islamic cities, where depopulation is encouraged due to overcrowding, the local inhabitants must be encouraged to stay in the old city. In order to do so the old city must become more attractive, not only to its inhabitants but also to other people living outside the old city, by putting the old city on a more equal footing with the new quarters. However, the old city should not be transformed into a dead museum-like area. Conservation policies are urgently needed which not only maintain the essential quality of the historic city through urban form, height of buildings, character and scale, but which also allow change and modernisation providing facilities necessary to improve the lives of the inhabitants. Urban policies for Nablus should aim at the preservation of the old core by giving it new roles and functions in its relations with the modern city of Nablus. The process should not be set in finalistic terms of conservation; it should be viewed as a means, not an end, in itself. Preservation and renovation policies should enable the old core to continue to be viable in socio-economic terms for its inhabitants. The objectives of the project may be broadly identified as two. First, the restoration and pres-

ervation of the old city must be undertaken; the built fabric must be documented. Second, revitalization of the commercial center of the old city must be undertaken by a program of upgrading, reuse, and provision of modern facilities for the local population and visitors.

The following pages are a summary of what the author sees as general concepts to develop a comprehensive strategy for the conservation and revitalization of the old city of Nablus, including the souq area. The suggestions focus on the necessary legislation and survey, renovation and recycling, design guidelines and traffic control, and the mechanisms for operating the conservation program.

6.c.1 Legislation, Designation, and Survey

In Nablus, the only legislating body is the Municipality of Nablus, due to the political situation and the absence of a national government. The legislation often exists but is not implemented properly, or even disregarded because there is insufficient commitment to conservation, and is not part of a comprehensive strategy for conservation.³

Existing legislation focuses on individual monuments, rather than the surrounding fabric. Therefore, as a first step towards a comprehensive program for conservation, the criteria for listing buildings and designating conservation areas must be established. These criteria are threefold:

1. Historical -The history of the building or area and its significance;
2. Physical -The architecture of the building or area, stylistic integrity, group value, uniformity of character, and quality;
3. Social and economic -use, way of life, and ⁴ commercial viability.

Another fundamental step is survey and analysis. Conservation areas must be surveyed and their physical condition determined. The survey should include a general report, a detailed and meticulous inspection, an historical analysis and a structural investigation in depth. Also the ownership pattern needs to be documented.

Since the old city of Nablus only occupies a tiny fraction of the whole city, the author sees that the optimal strategy would be the conservation of the entire old city by declaring it a "historic district" to be saved from further erosion by specific legislation. It is important as a formal step which draws attention to the importance of the area and gives it protection, because a building in a conservation area can not be demolished without permission. Listing should distinguish buildings whose exterior only is valuable from buildings which also

have important interiors. It is also important to identify the areas which need quick and immediate improvements.

6.c.2 Renovation, Rehabilitation, and Adaptive Use

One of the major threats to the souq area, in particular, is that some falling structures create unsafe zones for the pedestrians, especially those that are located on the major spine, (Figure 51). Therefore, the need for an immediate action to solve this problem is the most urgent one. Structurally unsound buildings need to be removed, others need to be renovated to accommodate new activities. It is important in this regard to start with those buildings or structures owned by institutions rather than individuals.

The need for a rapid upgrading of the existing appearance of the physical environment as a whole, as well as basic infrastructure, is also urgent. Upgrading the infrastructure includes sewerage, water mains, street paving, street lighting, solid waste and garbage disposal, and measures to relieve traffic congestion. It is important that quick and inexpensive techniques be used to safeguard immediate improvements. The overhead electric cables and telephone wires must be replaced by underground systems; television aerials must be removed. The facades of the souq need to be cleared and repaired; shutters need to be replaced and unified if possible. It is also recommended that surfacing



Fig. 51. A collapsed structure located beside the main route of the Souq of Nablus.

(photo by the author)

of some streets and alleyways should be in stone as in the past. Some parts of the souq are preferred to be covered, using traditional methods if possible. Otherwise, the use of canopies over shops must follow some kind of order, such as similar heights and materials. New additions to the traditional structures should be removed, especially if they are in discord, either in material, style, or design, with the old buildings. Modern means of safety, health, and communications need to be provided in the individual shops. Improvement is also supposed to include the provision of public restrooms. The traditional specialization of the souqs, which was violated in many parts, should be reinforced. However, other considerations should determine the location and arrangement of the different types of merchandise, and not just the location of the mosque.

Since souqs were designed for people and to accommodate different activities, and not to be treated as museums, certain types of modern business must be introduced to the traditional souq. In addition, it is necessary to encourage some specialized and unique goods to stay in the souq. Crafts need to be recalled to occupy some parts of the souq. If souqs are to be rehabilitated, they should contain activities that are economically feasible and, at the same time, will not have any major negative impact on the structure of the historical buildings. Polluting, noisy and

harmful industries must be removed and relocated. On the other hand, since it is desirable to maintain an optimal mix of activities to generate exuberant diversity, cultural and educational facilities, (such as primary schools, health and community centers, etc.), should be attracted.

"Historic towns, like living organisms, have evolved in the past and must be allowed to evolve now and renew their cells in order to stay alive."⁵ Many elements are as valid today as they were in the past and, therefore, should be preserved; other elements have to be altered or adapted to changes in social and economic conditions while some have become obsolete and should be replaced. Many of the used buildings could be rehabilitated and with minor modifications, they could be reused for other purposes.

The different institutions located in the vicinity of the souq could be grouped into three categories in terms of their present use: (Figure 52)

- Institutions whose activities still function these days, but that have been abandoned because of deteriorating physical conditions: These could be renovated and reused for some original purposes. Examples of these buildings are hammams, (public baths), which are desired by the older generation.

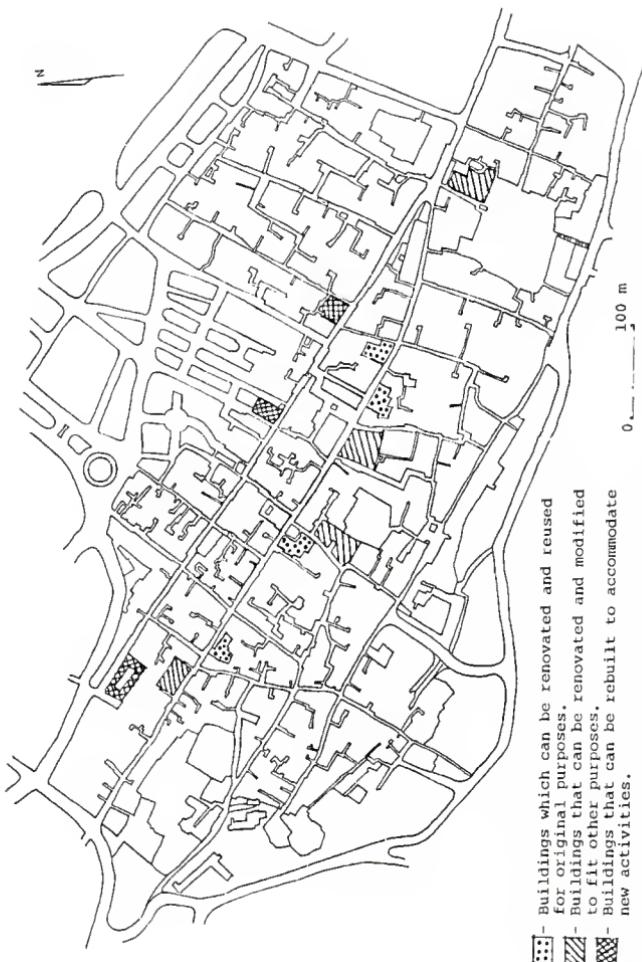


Fig. 52. Current condition of some important institutions in the souq area, Nablus.

Base map: Municipality of Nablus, 1987.

- Institutions no longer active but with buildings in good condition: These could be renovated and modified in ways to fit other purposes. Some of these buildings are old palaces, (built by wealthy families), and madrasas, (which can be converted into primary schools). The aim is to adapt the traditional fabric of the old city to the demands of modern life.
- Institutions no longer active with buildings in a very bad state and in danger of collapse: These could be rebuilt to accommodate appropriate activities. Examples of these institutions are khans or wakalat, especially Wakala al-Farrokhyya (Figure 53) near the main entrance to the souq from the west. The northern exterior wall of this wakala can be renovated and preserved as part of the continuous southern facade of the souq. However, new buildings must be designed to fit in scale and style with existing traditional structures. "The architectural heritage of the past must not be rejected but utilised selectively together with new design concepts and relevant new technology to create buildings with modern amenities which are in harmony rather than conflict with the existing urban fabric."⁶ In order to do so, a set of design guidelines should be established for new buildings and any change or addition to the exteriors of the traditional buildings in and around the old city.



Fig. 53. Wakala al-Farroukhyya in the western part of the souq, Nablus.
(photos by the author)

6.c.3 Architectural Design Guidelines and Traffic Control

As a first step, three kinds of areas must be identified in the old city according to the value and quality of the architectural heritage:

1. Areas for special protection, where no modification of the external architecture of the buildings or of their internal structure will be permitted in the future. Traditional structures should be restored and modern architectural intrusions be removed.
2. Areas of modest architectural value, where the traditional morphology -the courtyard house and the pedestrian street pattern- needs to be preserved but limited modification and partial renovation of structures be allowed. Any alterations or additions to the exterior must be subject to permission by the municipality.
3. Areas adjacent to traditional structures, where construction must not conflict with the architecture and morphology of the old city. The height of new development should be controlled to protect the skyline of the area and prevent overlooking and intruding on other people's privacy. Also, control over the height and number of floors will maintain the microclimatic qualities of the low-rise buildings in the old city. Of course, the

economic aspect must be taken into consideration, since the general trend is toward taller buildings of mixed-use occupancy.

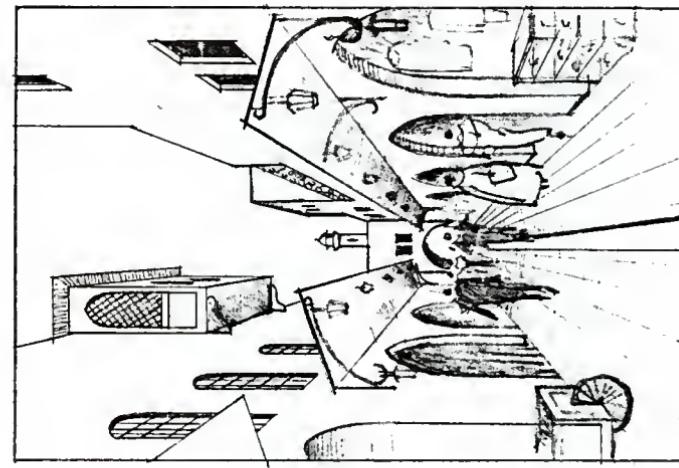
However, the principal rule should be that no demolition, alteration or addition be allowed without permission from the municipality. The municipality should encourage, or even obligate, the individual owners to repair and maintain their buildings. Therefore there must be incentives to help the owner fulfil his obligations, and in some circumstances penalties for failure to do so.

In the old city a variety of traditional architectural elements will be prevalent, the disappearance of which would greatly impoverish the area. To maintain harmony when any rebuilding or alteration becomes necessary, or when a new building is to be erected, the municipality should have recourse to a series of illustrated studies of separate architectural features showing how these may be designed using traditional building methods and materials whenever possible. Using the same materials and techniques in restoration work as were used in the originals has many advantages. It makes possible the perfect blending of repair work with the existing structures. The use of original materials and techniques involves research and the training of special work teams in traditional skills.

Initiating a program on the principle of "learning by doing" to train building craftsmen will also help. This will provide an opportunity to increase the skills and education of the people.

The old city in general must remain a predominantly pedestrian precinct. Therefore traffic must be controlled and solutions to the transportation and parking problems need to be found. In this regard, administrative solutions might be more effective than physical ones, since the aim is to keep the district in its traditional high density form. The penetration of the automobile, or at least of heavy traffic, can not be allowed. Vehicles should only be allowed in special service lanes, catering for the immediate needs of the population and for emergencies, and should be restricted to fixed hours in the early morning and evening. Shops should be serviced by special vehicles appropriate to the narrow lanes. Therefore, facilities needing direct access by car are not to be encouraged inside the old city.

In general, design guidelines must be kept simple. They are useless unless they can be enforced. It is also true that any conservation program without mechanisms for pursuing and administering such a program, will remain on paper.



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Fig. 54. (1) The present situation. (2) The expected change.
(photo and sketch are by the author)

6.c.4 Organizational Mechanisms and Implementation

How can this project be implemented? Can the only local authority (the Municipality of Nablus) carry out such a project without a national government? The action to protect the old city would demand enormous financial resources. Although the author will not try to answer these questions, it is assumed that funds could be brought from rich Arab countries. However, the municipality should look for other resources, and it might be necessary to associate international organizations (i.e. the UNESCO) in a campaign to safeguard the old city. In the worst cases, where not enough money is available to implement such a project, the project could be divided into separate sections in the hope that each section could be implemented over different time periods, thus allowing a structured, consistent and comprehensive rehabilitation program with the available resources.

The municipality should establish an advisory commission which would include historians, architects, engineers and laymen. Such a commission would have to be funded to enable it to commission surveys, draw on professional expertise to prepare lists of buildings and designate conservation areas, and establish the necessary controls and incentives. Also, an effective management team must be formed. This team

would review the designs and supervise restoration, conversion, repair and maintenance, and generally pursue and administer the conservation policies of the old city.

The municipality must bear much of the responsibility for the rehabilitation of the old city and the provision of adequate physical and socio-cultural infrastructures. Adopting attractive policies will encourage other parties to participate in the rehabilitation program. There must be incentives such as tax exemption, grants or loans to help and encourage the individual owners in renovating their buildings. On the other hand, a law must be passed to allow the municipality to collect a portion of the expenses from the shop owners, since they are the beneficiaries from such a project. The municipality may start with pilot projects which could be managed easily and would demonstrate the economic and social advantages to inhabitants of the old city. Starting with key buildings owned by the municipality or the waqf will encourage the people to get involved. Most important is the role of the municipality in making sure that the different building and construction codes and regulations in the old city are well maintained. Cooperation between the Municipality, the Chamber of commerce, the waqf, and the Department of Antiquities is essential, since these institutions have a significant role to play, not only in the souq area but also throughout the entire city.

To achieve functional integration, public and private initiatives ought to join in the effort. It can not be left solely to the municipality. The business community, administrators, intellectuals, and professionals must work together to achieve the desired revitalization of the historic center and to find ways to keep the traditional core alive, viable, and vital and to prevent its further deterioration and decline. There must be tangible rewards for those who participate, and it could be prestige in the community rather than money. It is also necessary that the department of architecture at An-Najah National University in Nablus share in the effort.

Public interest and participation in the program is vital. "Legislation alone can not preserve or conserve a heritage; nor can ample public funds, without the public's belief in the need to preserve and conserve."⁷ It is important to encourage initiative, cooperation and a sense of responsibility among owners and residents, and put them into a position where they assume the responsibility of improving their habitat themselves. Comprehensive programs need to be instituted to educate people of their responsibilities regarding conservation. Workshops might be set up to preserve some of the old buildings and to advise the tenants on how best to maintain them.

6.d Problems and Obstacles

There are many problems facing any program or strategy to preserve the old city of Nablus in general. The following are some of these problems:

1. The absence of a national government for the native residents, due to the political dilemma, is the most important one.
2. Due to the unsettled situation, the souq in particular and the old city in general can not be promoted as tourist-oriented environment, at least for the time being.
3. Conservation, while it is of interest to many, is considered by most to be far from the top of the city's list of priorities.
4. Even if a conservation program is established, the lack of adequate resources to implement such a project would be the most critical problem. Lack of resources will lead to inadequate research and, ultimately, to superficial and often damaging restoration.
5. The lack of experts in conservation and restoration is yet another problem.
6. In the old city, it is difficult to determine boundary

lines and sometimes to trace all the legal owners.

7. Most of the tenants can not bear even part of the costs of renovation, and the prevalence of multi-ownership discourages landlords from investing in the maintenance and improvement of their properties.
8. Using local materials, i.e. stones, is sometimes more expensive than using cement blocks.
9. Finally, many inhabitants of the old city are not easily convinced that a building in its old form might be of greater value than a new modern Western one. They must not see this as a choice but rather an opportunity to have both the conveniences of modern technology and the meanings of the traditional form.

6.e Summary

The Souq of Nablus has the same features of other souqs in many Islamic cities. It has played a great role in bringing vitality and livability to the center of the city for centuries. Besides its commercial function, the souq serves as the focal point for social interaction and communal life. Although the Souq of Nablus is still alive, its importance is declining due to the competition by the modern commercial center and the deterioration of its physical structure.

If nothing is done to save the souq, it will continue to decay and gradually the city will lose one of its vital commercial institutions and its inhabitants will no longer experience the harmony and richness of their city. At the same time, demolishing the souq in order to build a new commercial center ignores important considerations.

Maintaining a sense of historical continuity is essential, especially at a time when the people are striving for cultural identity and survival under the occupation.

Demolishing means that we have no respect for the heritage of our forefathers, and we should not expect future generations to respect us.

Since the Souq of Nablus has the potential for continuity and rehabilitation, the author sees that the optimal solution will be to upgrade and conserve the souq and make it more attractive within an overall policy to preserve the entire old city of Nablus. Since it is the only local authority, the Municipality is urged to adopt such a policy towards the old city. The author suggests many concepts to help develop a program for conserving and rehabilitating the souq area in particular and the entire old city in general. In addition to rehabilitation, new developments should be gradually introduced, but only when it is necessary and by integrating the new with the old.

The author realizes that there are many problems facing the implementation of such a project. But, the least that we can do is to keep the souq alive and safe, by removing the remains of collapsed structures which create unsafe zones. The Municipality can prevent further deterioration and intrusion by establishing a set of rules to control any alteration or addition to the traditional structures. The Municipality, with its own resources, should quickly start improving small areas where urgent action is required. Each area must be part of a larger project to be completed step by step and over a long period of time.

Of course, such a project will not succeed without the public's awareness and belief in the need to preserve and conserve the cultural heritage. If we collaborate and work together to save our heritage, future generations will give credit not only to our ancestors who built, but also to those of us who saved and kept the continuity.

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

1. Ronald Lewcock, "Three Problems in Conservation: Egypt, Oman and Yemen," in Conservation as Cultural Survival, Proceedings of Seminar 2, Istanbul, 1978. Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980, p. 66.
2. Said Zulficar, in the Opening Remarks of "Conservation as Cultural Survival," op. cit., p. xiii.
3. Parts of the existing souq of Nablus have gone through such a "renovation" process, but, unfortunately, this resulted in only slight changes rather than an overall rehabilitation.
4. Sherban Cantacuzino, "Blueprint for Conservation in the Third World," MIMAR: Architecture in Development, No. 24, June 1987, p. 20.
5. R. I. Lawless, "The Future of Historic Centers: Conservation or Redevelopment?," in G. H. Blake and R. I. Lawless (eds.), The Changing Middle Eastern City, New York, 1980, p. 205.
6. Ibid., p. 206.
7. Ronald Lewcock, op. cit., p. 75.
8. Ibid., p. 76.

Appendix A

QUESTIONS

A set of prepared questions was used only to interview the officials of the municipality and the chamber of commerce. The questions asked were:

- What kind of proposals do you have to improve the situation in the old city?
- What kind of problems do you face when dealing with the old city?
- Do you plan to tear down any part of the old city?
- What restrictions do you apply in the old city in general and the souq area in particular?
- Do you have any special regulations for new buildings in the old city?

While in the informal conversation, the pedestrians were asked questions such as:

- Why are you here? For shopping, watching, or passing?
- How many times per day/week do you come here? When?
- When you come here, which way do you usually take and why?
- Which is your favorite part of the souq and why?
- What kind of shops do you suggest adding to the souq?

The questions addressed to the shopkeepers or shopowners were:

- How much do you earn per month?
- Do you prefer to stay in this area and why?
- Are you the owner of this shop? If not, how much do you pay for it?

- Have you considered moving to other places?
- Do you like the idea of the specialized souqs or do you prefer to be away from the same type of shops?
- What is the best time or day for sales and why?
- Will you be able to pay some amount in order to improve the condition of the souq including your shop? How much can you pay?
- What do you suggest to improve the situation and how?
- Do you go to the mosque at praying times? If yes, how do you keep your shop at that time?
- Do you prefer to open your shop on Fridays?

Appendix B

GLOSSARY

AMIN: reliable, trustworthy, authorized representative; chief, master of a guild.

ARIF: knowing, cognizant; expert, authority; monitor.

ASWAQ (sing. SOUQ): markets.

BIMARISTAN: a hospital or health center.

CARAVANSERAI: a Persian name for khan.

CARDO: the north-south thoroughfare of the Roman city.

CHAHAR SU: four arches.

DAR al-ISLAM: countries in which Islam is dominant.

DECUMANUS: the east-west thoroughfare of the Roman city.

HAMMAM: a public bath.

IWAN: roofed or vaulted hall open at one end.

JAMI': the Friday mosque.

KHAN: a place that provided lodging and some protection for foreign merchants.

MADRASA: school for teaching of Islamic theory and law.

MAIDAN (MAYDAN): town square or open place.

MASHRABIYYA: open wooden lattice screens.

MIHRAB: niche whether concave or flat indicating the qibla.

MUHTASIB: traditional Muslim administrative official with urbanist duties including those of checking on weights, measures, prices, collecting taxes, etc.

MURISTAN (MARISTAN): a hospital or health center.

NAQIB: guild representative.

QADI: a Muslim judge.

QANTARA (pl. QANATER): a room or series of rooms built over a street.

QAYSARIYYA: a locked up market for the sale and storage of valuable goods.

QIBLA: direction of prayer. Also synonymous in some contexts with mihrab.

SABIL: public street fountain.

SHARI'A: the Islamic law stemming from the Qur'an and regulating the social lives of Islamic societies.

SHEIKH (SHAYKH): a title of respect, normally for a distinguished scholar. It was accorded to various governing officials of religious institutions.

SUNNAH: the model behavior of the Prophet Muhammad -the practice he endorsed and the precedents he set.

WAKALA (pl. WAKALAT): an Egyptian name for khan.

WAQF (pl. AWQAF): land or property perpetually endowed upon a pious institution, the income of which is managed by a legally appointed administrator.

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ISLAMIC SOUQS (BAZAARS) IN THE URBAN CONTEXT:
THE SOUQ OF NABLUS

by

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B. S., Yarmouk University, Jordan, 1984

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Department of Architecture

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

1989

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